NOVEL
2
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LONER LIFE
IN ANOTHER WORLD

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CLASS REP
The White Loser Inn – The Bath
NUDIST GIRL
ANGELICA
FISH GIRL

BOOK CLUB PRESIDENT
VICE REP A
“There’s no need to rush; I think we’re all worried about him, but Haruka-kun is making his way up toward us at this very moment, I know it.”

LONER LIFE
IN ANOTHER WORLD

Loner Life in Another World (Light Novel) Vol. 2
© 2018 Shoji Goji
Illustrations by booota
First published in Japan in 2018 by OVERLAP Inc., Ltd., Tokyo.
English translation rights arranged with OVERLAP Inc., Ltd., Tokyo.

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Seven Seas press and purchase enquiries can be sent to Marketing Manager Lianne Sentar at press@gomanga.com. Information regarding the distribution and purchase of digital editions is available from Digital Manager CK Russell at digital@gomanga.com.

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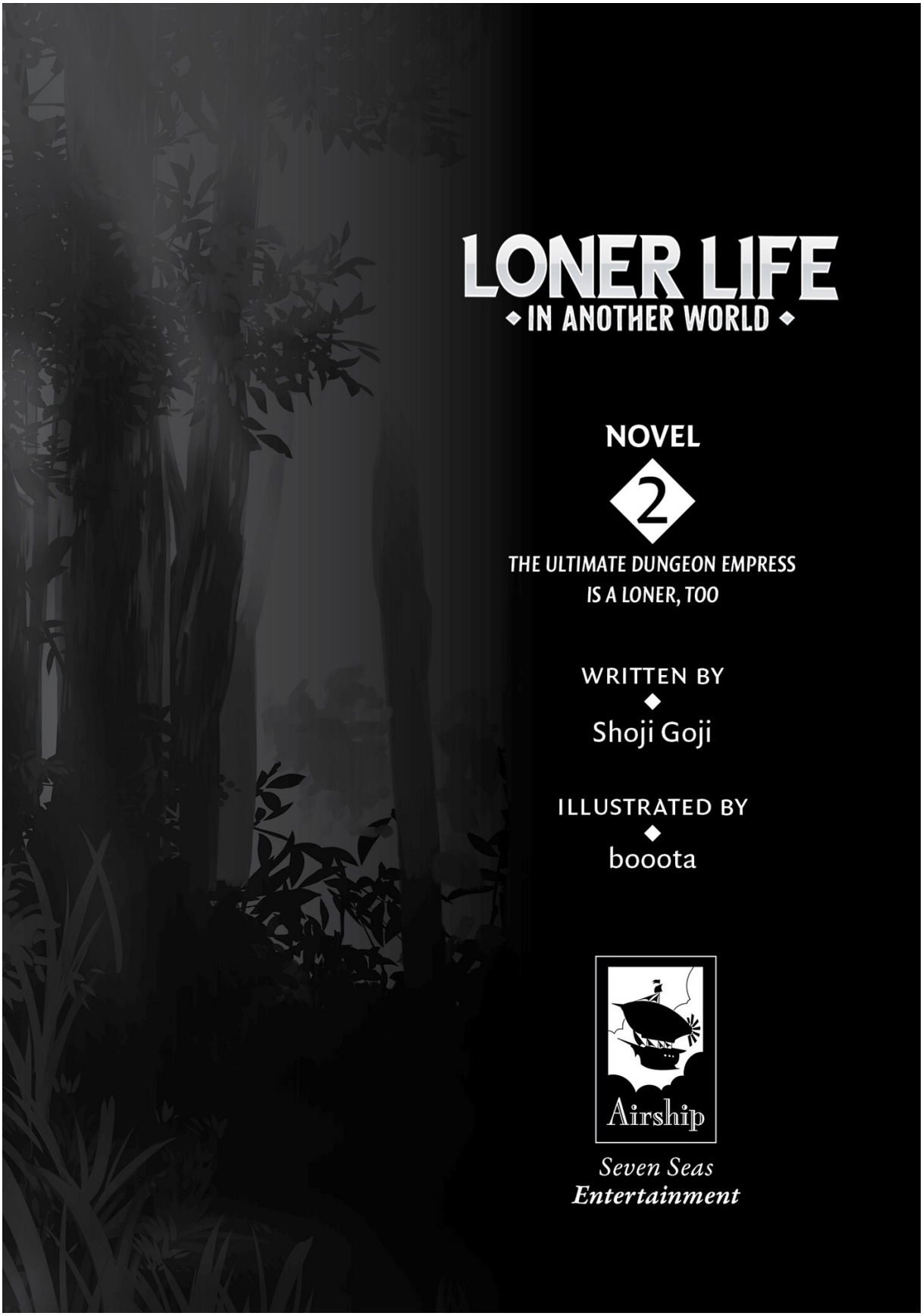
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Julie Davis
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: Adam Arnold
PUBLISHER: Jason DeAngelis

ISBN: 978-1-64827-438-1
Printed in Canada
First Printing: July 2022
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



LONER LIFE
IN ANOTHER WORLD

NOVEL

2

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON EMPRESS
IS A LONER, TOO

WRITTEN BY

Shoji Goji

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booota

Airship

Seven Seas
Entertainment

PROLOGUE

I knew you were there all alone, beneath the dark earth—I knew you were, my loner friend.

◆

CLOAKED IN THE BLACKEST of jet-black shadows, even when she was still, sword in hand, I could tell that she was strong. Forget strong. Plain invincible. And she didn't use cheats to get there—her strength alone reached cheat skill levels. The hollow eye sockets of her skull glittered. I was locked in endless combat with a dark knight captured some millennia ago, and as we slashed and clashed endlessly, I stared into those empty, flashing eye sockets.

Thanks to some malevolent and false information, I ended up on a raging battlefield with a vicious man-eating god-demon. The nerds *told* me it was a cliff!

Our swords danced through the air. Never-ending time crumbled into minuscule pieces and broke apart, leaving only the fathomless depths of eternity to rush past me as time yanked itself together and accelerated. Meanwhile, my mind rose above it all to witness the endless flashes of her writhing sword; moments that seemed as if they were about to end piled infinitely on top of each other until the moments started to dissolve altogether. Amid that raging tempest of time, our eyes met.

I saw everything—the briefest interval of time spark—and every possible way that our swords could collide, and in a fountain of those collisions, we swung our weapons.

Thanks to an evil and vicious violation of any possible reasonable building construction code, I had to deal with this insane mess. A freaking pitfall?!

The fading light drew parallels with my crumbling body. Like a curse, every time her sword cut through the moth-eaten darkness, I caught a glimpse of her dusty, hollow skull. My thoughts sped up increasingly, endlessly, until they started to split apart at the seams and dissolve into thin air. The darkness woven with evil that filled the air began to chip and grind away. This couldn't last for much longer.

I had done absolutely nothing wrong and found myself the victim of this preposterous absurdity. There was no rational response. That was one of the problems with being in another world.

I could only see brief flashes of the skull creature's striking sword; when I finally saw the sword itself, it would be all over. I had to finish it before I saw it and cut it down…but there would be no break, no breather from the endless dance of raging blows.

I had to move my body consciously. I was caught in a flurry that rendered strength and skill meaningless. Among the ever-quickening winks of

thought, soon, only my soul would be able to up with this infinitely extending, flashing time.
This was no fight. I had no chance of winning. In the endless procession of eternity, as our swords crossed like a miracle, my consciousness—now moving at a speed that had no limit—ran up against the shores of the fastest possible intervals of time.
Now I understand, I thought. *Now I get it.* My "above-limit" luck, which had saved me from the brink of death many times, that good, great, amazing, ridiculous luck had made it this far—and now it began to truly manifest for the first time.
I'd taken my good luck for granted until now.
There was no way I could fight this monster. The difference in our skill was insurmountable.
Did I dare keep fighting, despite how hopelessly slow I was in comparison? But my luck had only unleashed because I kept on trying, swinging my sword. Hidden in the fog, I had an answer all along.

Skull Knight had awaited her demise there for thousands of years.
She believed that one day, it would finally all come to an end. So she kept on waiting. Waiting for the person who would kill her, and for the darkness. Waiting there, waiting alone.
An eternity spent at the bottom of a boundlessly deep pit, without a single other soul, a mind-crushing loneliness… *Shouldn't she be bored?!*
So I slashed with all my might. Shaved away unnecessary motions, scraped off any bodily interference. If I needed to move my body in ways that were physically impossible, I'd force it to move anyway with my skills. Like a machine, I'd kill her with my sheer stubbornness, even if by all accounts I really couldn't. *I'm going to get it,* I thought. *So I will!* I'd kill the concept of "couldn't" itself if I had to!
She had been waiting for this moment, right*?* Alone, deep underground, fighting against her destiny… I'd kill logic even if it couldn't ever be possible, I'd snap the phrase "*just give up*" in half!
That's it…I'll kill it even if I can't…so long as I kill the concept of "can't"… then I can kill anything!
I was a simple teenage boy at a very fragile stage, after all. I had to kill first with no time to spare, and I'd resolved to kill even if I couldn't. *Kill all the can'ts, and figure out the rest later!*

I didn't need to know if what I was doing was correct or incorrect. *The answers are usually written on the back, anyways, on like an answer sheet or something?* Second-guessing myself was the last thing that I needed right now!

DAY 25
MORNING
Merimeri set an ingenious trap designed to ensnare innocent high school boys.
OMUI GUILD

YOU KNOW THOSE FANTASY NOVELS, worlds overflowing with heroic adventure, passionate romance? Things weren't like that here. This was a cruel world, devoid of hope or dreams.
Instead, I lived in a fantasy world overflowing with false accusations and angry lectures! Sure, there was magic and there were monsters, but the biggest menace facing humanity was a lengthy scolding by my classmates.

After returning from my cave, weary as can be, the gatekeeper got mad at me, then Class Rep got mad at me while crying, and *then* the whole group of girls gave me an all-night fantasy world lecture.
I suffered some damage from my fight with whatever-his-name-was in the first place, but now I had to face a fresh storm of scolding every time a few of the girls got back to the inn, resetting the time loop on the lecture. I worried the lecture might be an infinite loop.
"I'm tired! *And* sleepy!" I yelled. "*And* I have no pocket money! Ever tried to do anything in a city *without any money*?! No? Then believe me already!"
Since I didn't have any money, I'd need to earn some more somehow. But when I went to the guild and saw the dull jobs of the bulletin board, I remembered there was no limit to this world's cruelty.
I escaped from the White Loser Inn to avoid all the lectures, but even here a shocking state of affairs awaited me! The terrible list of jobs on the bulletin board still hadn't changed!
"Why haven't the commissions changed yet?" I complained. "Where's a bulletin board with some hustle? This one hasn't done jack! It's lazier than a NEET! Can't you see I'm broke? Empty pockets? How long do I gotta wait for a job that rakes in some cash? Where's my get-rich-quick scheme?"
All I got was a sharp glare from the receptionist.
"And just how long do *I* have to wait before you stop showing your face around here?" she replied. "The commissions are for registered adventurers. If memory serves, you are not one! So why are you here?! And where did you go, anyways? Everyone was so worried about you!"
She must not have hit her glare quota yesterday. Yikes, she looked mad. But considering what happened, she shouldn't have anything to be mad at me about?
Unless…she's upset that I came back alive?! I certainly hoped that wasn't the case. No! It's because I forgot souvenirs!

That was the problem. I didn't bring back souvenirs. If I didn't get the people around here to like me more, I'd be in serious danger! These scoldings were way more dangerous than monsters.
"Hmmm. Are you sure there isn't, like, a bunch of money sitting around somewhere?" I asked.
"Don't you go stealing anyone else's money, even if it's just sitting there!" she said sharply. "That'd make you no better than a thief. That has nothing to do with guild business—saying something that is like announcing your criminal intent!"
A fresh wave of glares washed over me. These were serious ones, way different from tearful glares of Class Rep. I'd never encountered a danger like this back in the cave. I wanted to sleep, but if I went back to the inn, they'd all yell at me, and if I stayed in town, I had no money to do anything. The nerds were too busy nerding out as usual, so they weren't much help. They didn't bother to check in on me. *Couldn't they help me this one time when I need them?*
And the meatheads were sleeping in. They were pretty stupid.
Really stupid, right? After getting their limbs ripped out, being pushed to the brink of death and somehow managing to barely survive, then growing their limbs back and coming back to life thanks to my medicine and leaving the forest in a ragged mess—for some ridiculous reason, they *ran* all the way back to town.
Without sleep or rest, munching HP mushrooms as they went, they ran all the way to town, then collapsed in front of the gate, where the gatekeeper apprehended them.
Seriously stupid. How did you even get more suspicious than that?
There was no reason to rush, and they probably knew that, too. Who runs at all right after essentially coming back from the dead?! They'd barely started to recover!

Nothing to do, no money to spend, drifting in sorrow, prowling around town…*wait a second, is that a cute maid waving at me?* Was she inviting me to come over?! Could—could this be finally my time to experience the moment that all high school boys…
I got captured.
Before I knew it, I was surrounded by old soldiers! Why couldn't they be maids? What an ingeniously designed trap. Using a cute girl to wave me down, and then, when I follow her, to use a merry high school boy's instincts against him! A fearsome strategy! Merry—wait a second.
Merimeri's strategy?!
Merimeri emerged from behind the soldiers.
"I figured I'd try to capture you," she said, "but why do you make it so easy? I couldn't find you anywhere, and then you go after a maid *that* easily? What's wrong with you?!"
"She was the one who waved at me!" I protested.

I mean, a beautiful maid waved at me! Anyone would follow her, right?
"But when my soldiers waved at you, you ran away!"
Uh, duh. They were old dudes. Anyone would run away!
"And don't make that face like you don't know who I am!" she snapped. "My name is *Merielle*. It's written on the permit I gave you. I'm not Merimeri! I'm Merielle!"
"Are you sure? Even your mom, Murimuri, she called you Merimeri…"
Tears came to her eyes. "Even my mom? I…I guess I'll just go by Merimeri now… Just call me Meri…"
Why was her steward so mad at me now? *Although, if we could swap him out with a maid…* Nope, I wasn't thinking anything.
"My mother and father were searching for you to give their thanks, but since we couldn't find you anywhere, we set the trap. Were you hiding all along?"
"Er, nah, I came back last night. Well, late at night, but the gates were closed and they wouldn't let me in, and then when I eventually got inside, the gatekeeper captured me. Makes no sense, right? If you're gonna capture me, you gotta let me in first!"
Why was she clenching her fists and trembling violently?
Merimeri coughed loudly. "Anyways! Their thanks. For saving not just me, but my mother and my father, the duke of this land—*are you listening to me?*" I'd started to fall asleep, but I nodded rapidly. "Are you sure? Are you really sure? It's not much, but please take this as your reward."
She sweetened up all of a sudden, huh? Either way, she handed me a considerably sum of money. Rescuing carriages under attack was looking more and more like a serious career option.
"Any chance you're planning to get attacked again sometime soon?" I asked.
"Why would we be planning that?! Sometime soon? Are you expecting another attack? We've already took the lord behind it into custody, healed everyone up, and increased our guard, so we do not expect any further danger."
So much for that career.
That enemy was pretty strong, and Merimeri's family were defenseless against their poisoned blades. I guess there were a lot of mushrooms on the market now, so even if they were attacked, they'd have medicine. No more fast cash for me.
With my popularity as low as ever, and funds to match, I had nowhere near enough to buy the Pheromone Ring that I nearly got my hands on before. But I had *some* cash now, at least, so I decided to wander around town.
I walked down the main road. What should have been the armory had been converted into a specialty goblin club store. I went inside.
The shopkeeper was a blacksmith. Was he really okay selling only wooden clubs?
"Yo, old timer," I called. "The boss goblins dropped a bunch of clubs."

The moment I showed him the clubs I had collected in the forest, he flung himself at me from across the store and handed me a massive pouch of eles. Easy as pie.
“This is all I can afford! Please take it! Why did they drop so many clubs in the first place?!”
It would take too long to tell the story even if I wanted to, plus it was a painful, terrible tale that took place deep in the woods. A tale that would shock anyone.
“Well, I stabbed them and they dropped dead. And then they dropped their clubs, so I just…picked them up? As you do?”
He raised his eyebrows. “How come you’re acting like their deaths are an accident? Do you mean you killed them?”
Well, they shouldn’t go swinging clubs at a human who’s crashing into things at high speeds. It wasn’t my fault! Yeah, their deaths were all accidents!
“Uh, uh, well, it was more like they fell over…y’know?”
Grumbling endlessly about something or other, the old dude appraised the clubs. For some reason, clubs sold really well with the women in town. That sounded like bad news for the safety of this town to me.
The goblin kings and emperors had clubs, too, but I figured I’d instantly bankrupt the store with those, so I didn’t bother showing him. Whenever a store went bankrupt in this town, they tended to blame me. What a terrifying tradition! This town was overflowing with false accusations. All against me.
After selling the clubs, I went to the general store. The lady working there had unfortunately yet to overcome her mushroom addiction. She had a very serious problem, in fact. How do you cure a regeneration mushroom junkie?
“I know you have them!” she screeched at me. “Mushrooms! I’ll buy everything I can, just show me the mushrooms!”
“If you want mushrooms so badly, then why haven’t you gotten me my rice?”
But when I told her that, she broke down into hysterical tears and flung herself to the floor, where she clung to my feet. I quickly agreed to sell her mushrooms for some cash and dried fruit.
She snatched the mushrooms out of my hand and rubbed them against her cheek. This was a horribly advanced stage of addiction. It was starting to get creepy. I kinda hoped she’d stop.
The guy from the shady store seemed to still be out of town, meaning I couldn’t get my hands on any more *appeal* for the time being. *No more pheromones for me…*
Class Rep and the other girls were raiding a dungeon. You needed to be a member of the guild to go. I had some precious free time until night, but then they’d be back! Those angry lectures, those furious rants… I had a night of hell in store for me.

I needed a bribe for them. I made some cookies in my spare time back at the cave, but since I didn't have butter, they tasted weird. When I gave a few to the poster girl at the inn as a test, though, she seemed to enjoy them. Never mind enjoy, actually. She flapped around noisily in some mysterious dance. Did this mean they were tasty?

There weren't many sweets in town, since sugar was so expensive. There was dried fruit and fruitcake, so maybe I should make some of that to calm everyone down when they got mad at me. Thinking about it, the risk of a scolding when I got back was very, scarily high, especially if I left town.

They were so mad at me yesterday because I didn't bring them souvenirs, I thought. Whatever-his-name-was didn't even have any drop items or weapons. That must be why they all got mad at me. They were really upset because whatever-his-name-was didn't bring them any sweets, and I became the victim for his lack of tact! *They were raging furious at me yesterday.*

So…weapons or equipment wouldn't do. High school girls preferred sweets, apparently. I was in for a serious round of questioning by the girls and the commander. *Time for one more set, I guess.*

I had to make do with fruitcake, especially because I had no butter. Some sort of sweet bread was what I needed, and fruitcake…well, it had cake in the name.

I borrowed the kitchen to make my cake. Since the poster girl wanted some, she let me use the kitchen for free in exchange for some cake.

I used flour, dried fruit, and milk. I didn't know what kind of milk it was, but it was milk. If I failed and just got bread in the end, I could just steam it, sprinkle it with sugar, and trick them into thinking it was cake! *That's right —I just need something sweet!*

Asides from the meatheads, everyone else was in the dungeon. They wouldn't be back until night, so that's when the lecture would resume. I had to finish my fruitcake by then!

It was a race against time. Fruitcake was my only weapon to prove my innocence. *Because I didn't do anything wrong!*

My clothes and equipment were in tip-top shape as always, and I had healed all of my injuries with a mushroom potion. To be honest, though, my body was still in rough shape.

What almost did me in was flying back to town. That crash landing really messed me up. I almost died! I launched myself with all my might, only to remember afterward that I had no method of landing. Lost in memories and emotions, I smashed into the ground full-speed.

My body was a mess and I hadn't slept a wink, but in order to avoid getting yelled at there I was, making fruitcake. Utterly absurd.

In the name of shaking off all the false accusations, I kneaded that flour. I kneaded until it was as frothing as my mental state, kneading and rubbing and seething and grumbling, drifting asleep… *Speaking of which, those meatheads are still asleep!* Frying and steaming… *Is it finally time for me to*

fry some nerd heads? Why wouldn't they help me? Didn't they tell me they'd repay me for helping them in town? First I came and they weren't here, and now we're both here and they wouldn't even help me. They didn't even try to read the room! The room filled with the scent of fruitcake. *Why am I the only one doing anything? I'm freaking unemployed! Damn titles.*

It came out of the oven right as the girls came back.

"We're home! Hey, what's that delicious smell?"

Girls came pouring into the inn, squealing.

"Cake!"

"That looks amazing! You're the god of fruitcake!"

I won. The girls completely forgot themselves, along with all their lectures, and chowed down on the fruitcake and steamed bread thingies I made. They chomped on the fruitcakes whole, like kobolds biting into someone's head. With terrifying force, too!

Victory was mine—total victory! You could call it a blowout. A clean sweep. I'd earned my innocence. I knew they were false accusations all along! Now began my Count of Monte Cristo quest for revenge for being innocently accused! I was a count, after all—the count of my cave! But who to avenge myself against? For now, the nerds.

The room was full of the sounds of chewing and swallowing and crying. The girls ate in silence, showering the cakes in tears and swallowing them up. Good thing I cut them up in advance. If I had put the unsliced cake in the middle of the table, the scene would have turned into a brutal death match. For whatever reason, they kept crying, even as they laughed. Mushrooms weren't even involved this time. Maybe one of my ingredients had gone funny? *I don't think it's safe to be crying and laughing at the same time like this…*

We plunged straight into dinner after that, with everyone as loud as always. The meatheads came down for dinner at last, turning the conversation into complete chaos. No one knew what anyone else was talking about. I didn't know anyone's name either, which didn't help.

Eventually, everyone took turns taking baths and stayed up shouting and laughing until late at night. They really knew how to make a riot.

As usual, Class Rep was uncomfortably close to me, with the mean girls closing in on the other side, and all the athletes roughhousing and roaring with laughter. The poster girl rushed around in a dither, the meatheads talked about idiotic idiot things, the nerds ignored everyone else and nerdled around in their own corner, Vice Rep A cast me occasional glares, the girls kept trying to feed Vice Rep C more so she would actually grow, Vice Rep B was w-w—*wobbling?! No! I'm not looking at anything! I swear!*

Suddenly, everyone was glaring at me. The room fell dead silent. The number of Miss Glares in the room rapidly increased. It spread like an infection!

If I had just twelve people glaring at me, then I could've called them "The Twelve Glare Apostles", but alas, twenty pairs of glaring eyes were a great deal more. The force of those glares was overwhelming!

Even the poster girl had caught the glare bug. We were up to forty-two eyes glaring my way. They were so loud and obnoxious and rowdy just seconds ago, and now this? Why should a high school sophomore have to go through this? *When are they gonna learn basic social skills, sheesh?*

We passed the time like this until late at night, and then finally returned to our rooms. Sleep, sleep at last. I collapsed on my bed and passed out. Yep, I was wiped.

DAY 26
MORNING
Why do I need to embark on an adventure just to acquire my own sex appeal?
OMUI CITY STREETS

SO SLEEPY. So sluggish. So languid. Not nearly enough sleep. I wanted to sleep, but they woke me up. Soooo sleepy! *I'm a tired teenager*. *Someone take pity on me, goddamn it!*

All of the girls got accepted to join a three-day dungeon raid, so they had to go back to the dungeon. I was only level 11; I couldn't become an adventurer yet and had to stay back at home. As an unemployed loner shut-in, I supposed that was the natural order of things.

Can't I go back to my cave? I thought. Don't they just get mad at me every day while I'm here? At least, that's how it doesn't…not…feel? Why I deserved any of it remained a complete mystery to me.

I had a good amount of money now, more than 500,000 ele. Back to my bigshot millionaire life. *I can make fun of the plebes, at any rate.*

Class Rep didn't give me any more spending money, but I had some great shady dealings on the side where I unceasingly wheeled and dealed to stockpile cash. I supposed Class Rep was taking care of my bills at the inn—all the more reason for me to keep my money out of her sight! Paying my own bills would tip her off that I had money, and then she'd confiscate it. I had to use it all up before she noticed!

But the shady store guy still wasn't back yet, which meant the Pheromone Ring wasn't back yet either.

Where did my sex appeal run away to? How long did I have to wait before it'd rise up again? My lack of appeal must be what kept everyone mad at me every day. *Hurry up and get back here, shady store guy!*

The general store lady didn't have anything new, and definitely no rice. Still, now that I'd told her about the holy grail of deliciousness, mushroom rice, I was sure she'd get her hands on some at any cost. She was a total mushroom junkie, after all.

The armory, or rather club specialty store, seemed to be doing good business; there were tons of customers crowding the store. Mostly middle-aged women.

This town is doomed.

I drifted from store to store, but I couldn't find anything good. There weren't any shady nightlife establishments either. Where were the *adult* clubs?

I was bored out of my skull. Maybe I should sneak off to the dungeon with them?

Only adventurers were allowed to enter dungeons, but if I was sneaky enough, there wouldn't be any problem. *Dungeons sound pretty fun,* I thought. *The girls said they have great treasure, too.*

I remembered the nerds told me about how, if I entered a dungeon, I'd fall to the lowest level. It was unclear what would happen there, and for that reason I shouldn't go.

Why would I have to worry about falling, though? The ceiling would be too low to bother with my flying technique. I wouldn't have far to fall down in there in the first place.

However, I figured there would be plenty of gobbin' goblins and kobbin' kobolds around the dungeon. I had some serious, lasting emotional damage from all of the goblin emperors and kobold kings; I didn't want to meet those guys anytime soon.

Seriously, just imagining those fierce wild beasts with a taste for human heads threatened to drive me crazy with fear. They'd tried to chomp my own head right off about a hundred times. I didn't plan on fighting them again. It was pretty much a miracle that I was still alive after running away, albeit with a buttload of trauma.

And that King of the Hill game I played back in the forest! Hated it. That might have been the worst of all. I was the only one who wasn't a king—there was no way I could've won! Only kings won in games of thrones, and the goblins hogged all the seats! Totally unfair.

All right, then. I already got a good glaring from Guild Receptionist aka Class Rep. The list of guild commissions hadn't changed at all, as usual. Back in the guild, everyone was *still* refusing to make eye contact with me. They all turned their heads away when I walked by, in a most mysterious manner.

So I decided to leave town. Maybe some carriages were under attack out there, and they would give me some prize money for saving them.

Just outside the forest, a gentle breeze was drifting across the flat plain: a tranquil, harmonious scene. No monster worth a single ele popped up. Not a single carriage was under attack. There was nothing for me here. My role in the story was over. I didn't need any more equipment either.

Naturally, I'd buy up good gear in a second, as though I were playing an RPG. Remember, I was just a teenage guy. I wasn't *that* sharp yet. The thing was that I was pretty set on not fighting any more strong monsters, thereby rendering new equipment pointless.

It was too…peaceful outside, which was probably a good thing. It was a nice day.

An orc came hurtling out of the forest as soon as I thought that. Not an orc-faced man, but an actual orc. There wasn't too much of a difference, to be fair.

"How dare you ruin this peaceful scene!" I bellowed. "You'll die for that!"

It brought a party of kobolds and goblins with it, too. Were they after some killer sale or something? Should I follow them? Wait, even if I did, they'd just try to attack me! They were bound to leave me out, because I was a loner!
"Why did this town get so popular with monsters all of a sudden?" I shouted. "Cruising for the latest news? Where *does* a big galumphing orc like you get your intel from, anyways? Don't tell me that Merimeri went and put signs pointing here in the forest too?!"
I beat up the goblins, beat up the kobolds, and beat up the occasional orc, too. It was a good monster beating all around.
Were we in some weird kind of isekai game series now? That'd be better than a round of King of the Hill, at least! *Please, goblin kings, don't show up! I'm running out of royal one-liners to crown my battles with!*
Speaking of, no kobold kings either, please. *I'll unleash the mean girls on you if you pop up!* Although that would be a pretty scary affair for me, too.
How long would this monster beating have to go on? I felt like I'd been slugging away at monsters for ages, but there was no end in sight. Was I gonna get a freebie once I was done? Like maybe…a Pheromone Ring, for instance?! "Get yer sex appeal, get yer sex appeal! Sex appeal for everybody! "
Looking around, it was already getting dark out. My stomach rumbled. Couldn't I pause or save or something? It was time to go home! Sure, going home meant heading back into the forest to my cave, but it was the principle of the thing.
Hours passed. The monsters kept coming. Was I becoming the very best monster master, like no one ever was? Just how long would I have to keep fighting them? *Am I gonna win that freebie any time soon? Please let it be rice!* Roll up, you monsters! Step in for a beating, and I'll roll you all up into rice balls!
What the hell?! Now it was totally dark out. I was starving. Unable to resist my hunger a second longer, I chowed down on some mushrooms with one hand while fighting the monsters with the other. All this, and I was barely a step outside of town! I glanced around. Was it…over now? The end? If so, where was the freebie I was so clearly owed?!
"C'mon, be serious!" I roared. "What kind of horrible game is this? Why were there so many? Wouldn't you head back once you realized all your buddies got murked?! Get a grip!"
There was only one monster left: an orc king. Level 34. It had 327 friggin' HP. Not as strong as a goblin emperor, but it'd take forever to get rid of it!
"I can't believe this," I groaned. "It's late at night, I'm dead starving, and now I've gotta to fight an orc king? These things take forever! You wanna make me die of hunger? Is that your plan? Can I please just eat dinner and come back? I'll be right back, promise. Just gimme ten minutes!"
The orc king didn't seem keen on letting me grab a bite, which figured. This sucked. No courtesy. No better than those nerds. I wouldn't be shocked if a

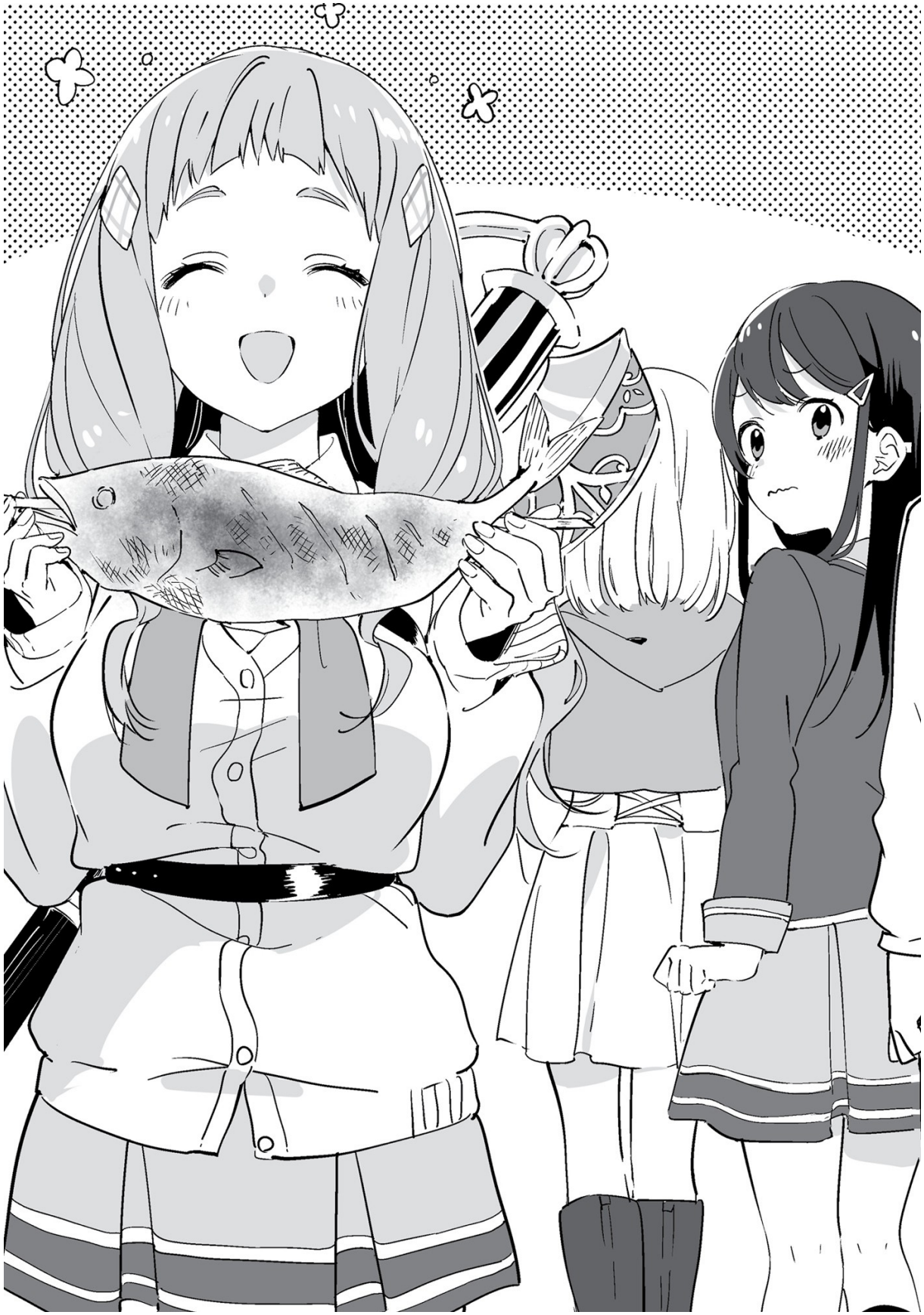
nerd king showed up at this point. *Looks like I'll have to beat this orc king to death*, I thought. This was bound to be a real pain in the ass, too.
I beat it up until it died. Finally, it was over for real! I killed every last monster. And yet…no freebie. Had I been tricked? I put in so much effort to defeat them all. I didn't even use any magic! I didn't want to hear that magic was ineffective on them, so I literally beat them all up with my staff, one at a time. No stabbing, no slicing—I whacked each and every one to death.
No freebies. Nada. Zip. *Screw this,* I thought. I went back into town.
I saw something ahead—a nerd king? No, no, I knew what the nerds looked like. It was an orc king and an orc boss. I got their spellstones and clubs, but I had to finish up there. I was exhausted, this was annoying, and my stomach was practically eating itself.
No free bonus gifts in sight. Despondent, I went back into town. All that fighting, for nothing!
If I bothered to get all of the spellstones, it would make me a ton of money, but the guild would never be able to afford them all.
Clubs covered the whole field. A club town. That wasn't so bad as a town identity. Especially if it meant a town of dance clubs. The last ingredient on my list was Mr. Sex Appeal. *So where are you hiding?*

DAY 25
MIDNIGHT
It’s kinda a long story. I cooked some fish in soy sauce, and now I’m guilty of all charges.
OMUI CITY GATES

WHEN WE GOT OUT OF THE DUNGEON in the evening, the people from the guild told us to hurry back to Omui. They heard from a neighboring town that monsters had destroyed one of the other cities in the area.
Then, they stopped receiving communication from that town as well. Based on the layout of the towns, they knew that the monsters were heading for Omui next. The Adventurers’ Guild immediately called an emergency summons.
We built a fence in front of the city gates, set a watch fire, and equipped ourselves for the coming onslaught. Life had become peaceful here, and it was all thanks to Haruka-kun. He fought alone to bring peace to all of us.
I swore to protect Haruka-kun before even realizing it. Kakizaki-kun and his friends, who were sleeping when we got back, agreed to help. Oda-kun and his friends lent them spare equipment, although it was a bit worse for wear. The jocks hadn’t fully recovered from their injuries yet, but they suited up in armor all the same.
We were warned that the threat could arrive at any time, but it had grown later and later, and we saw no trace of monsters at all.
Apparently, the rest of the guild members had been preparing for a fight since late morning. Even the daughter of the duke came to the fight, standing above the gate with her sword, helmet, and armor to the ready. It was natural for her to come, I supposed—the existence of the city hinged on this fight. This time, though, she had us to help. Or rather, she had Haruka-kun. He risked his life for us…or, well, did he? Haruka-kun wasn’t so much risking his life as he’d been throwing it away nonstop since he came here.
“Sorry for being stupid.” Those were his last words to me, when he left to fight Tanaka. He wasn’t talking about the jocks when he said that. That was his last testament. We all understood that.
I didn’t know if I should be surprised that he protected us all again. Or that we failed to help him, again. Or even that we ended up just watching him. Again. But at least he came back to us; I could be grateful for that. Haruka-kun himself seemed disappointed, for some reason, but at least he came back.
The battle looked so intense that we were right to worry if he could survive it. He must have been prepared to die.

We couldn’t help him then either, not the slightest bit. He saved us all by himself. *That’s all he’s done so far: saved us, rescued us, protected us.* We worked so hard to get stronger, but we still couldn’t help him back. We couldn’t protect the person we wanted to protect more than anything else. *We lost.* That was how we all felt. Thank goodness Haruka-kun saved himself in that battle and made it back alive.
Next time, we’ll protect him. We wanted to use the strength he had given us.
Next time, we’ll rescue him. Since that’s what he did for us, time and time again.
Haruka-kun would continue to keep us safe. Knowing him, I doubted he’d have any problems.
What I didn’t understand was that, based on his level, he should have been the weakest out of all of us. Despite the totally normal expression he wore when he returned, his clothes were tattered and his body was covered in cuts and wounds.
How could he act like things were normal! That guy had cut off most of the jocks’ limbs! That was the sort of monster Haruka-kun faced! He bore the brunt of all those attacks alone, so that we wouldn’t have to risk our lives. All for us.
This isn’t okay by any standards, I thought. But he survived his fight with Tanaka and came back to us, nonetheless. While sporting a normal, pleasant expression, he’d said just one thing: “I’m back.”
So tonight, we swore we’d do the right thing: protect him and help him rest up properly. That was the best—and the only—thing we could do. The one good thing was that Haruka-kun wasn’t an adventurer, so there was no way he’d be called on to fight off the monsters.
I was worried that I hadn’t seen the jocks yet today, but surely we’d manage to protect Haruka-kun tonight. We hadn’t paid him back yet in the slightest, despite everything he’d done for us. I wanted to protect Haruka-kun however possible, even if only while he was healing his injuries.
In the end, the stampede of monsters never came. Instead…Haruka-kun appeared.
“How come you guys’re all sitting around a campfire?” he asked, giving us a reproachful glance. “Why wasn’t I invited? Is it ’cause I’m a loner?”
Then his jaw dropped.
“You guys are having a barbecue without me? And I haven’t eaten in ages! Th-that’s not fair! Didn’t I prove my innocence with all the fruitcake? I wanted barbecue! This…this is bullying, isn’t it? Why me, not the nerds? I caught them for you, after all, so you should bully them instead! Why am I the only one left out? I’m so hungry!”
Apparently, he was starving? Why was he talking about a barbecue?
I walked up to him. “Listen, Haruka-kun,” I said, “we didn’t leave you out, okay? This isn’t a campfire. It’s dangerous, so let’s get inside, okay?”

I had no idea why fruitcake would prove that he was innocent of anything, but I was determined to not let Haruka-kun fight any more monsters today. He was acting as if everything was normal, refusing to admit any weakness, but I knew he must have countless injuries beneath his equipment. He wasn't in a state to fight anymore. Even if he used potions to heal his injuries, all the accumulated damage would have left him exhausted. I saw the exhaustion on his face. He looked like he was on the verge of collapse.
"A nearby town was attacked by an abnormal outbreak of monsters," I explained. "Now Omui is at risk. The soldiers and adventurers are preparing to defend the town, and we're going to help. But you need to rest, Haruka-kun. Don't worry about us, okay?"
Did I talk for too long? In the middle of my speech, he started cooking up some fish and liberally sprinkling them with some soy sauce. A crowd instantly formed around him.
Everyone eyed the fish longingly. Haruka-kun gobbled up the fish in delight. The scent of roasting soy sauce floated in the air. Everyone began to drool. Right as one of the adventurers called out to Haruka-kun, he placed his hand on the ground and a large stone sprouted out of the earth. He shaped it into a table, cleaned it with water, and lined up some fish. *He's…cooking?*
A long line formed of students who handed ele to Haruka-kun in return for the fried fish. Did he just make a food stall? He was charging a pretty penny, too!
But why hadn't the horde of monsters attacked yet? Everyone was chowing down on fish rather than staying alert. Was this a campfire barbecue all along?
I might have to get mad at you, Haruka-kun, I thought. He just started a business here, and now! Even the guild master was waiting in line! The duke's daughter was licking the bones of the fish dry! And why is he giving the biggest fish of all to Vice Rep B? Since when was she lining up, too?!
The sounds of laughter and chewing, the smell of burnt soy sauce. I thought we were supposed to fight? Protect the town? So why was I also standing in line?!



If he gives me a smaller fish than Vice Rep B, he'll never hear the end of it, I swore. Not in a million years!
The fish was amazing. And get this—he gave me the biggest one he had!

The monsters still didn't come even after all that. They must have avoided our scouts somehow. Haruka-kun was having a lively conversation with Oda-kun about something or other. Didn't he realize that it was dangerous to be here?
Then the guild master tugged Haruka-kun away to have a discussion. Were they fighting about something? I looked more closely—the duke's daughter was getting involved. That food cart must've been illegal. I kept watch. Did something happen? Now they were making big, excited gestures. *I guess the story is reaching its climax?*
Then, for some reason, the duke's daughter grabbed her head and stomped her feet. Huh? Now Haruka-kun was stomping his feet, too? He had a strange expression on his face as he trampled the ground; he wasn't stomping very hard.
The guild receptionist called me over. Don't we need to wait for the monsters here?
"We should stay here in case the monsters come, shouldn't we?" I said.
"Can we talk here?"
"I don't care about soldiers or waiting or monsters or scouting or searching or anything else!" she cried. "Just get over here! We need an *interpreter!* We can't understand anything he's saying!"
It sounded like a mistake to me, but I left the encampments to everyone else and walked over to join the scene I'd been watching.
Haruka-kun appeared to have been declared guilty yet again. He was still in the midst of his testimony, but it was written on everyone else's faces that he guilty beyond a doubt.
"No one told me anything!" he huffed. "I didn't know there was going to be a monster attack! They showed up, so I beat them up, y'know? I've been at it all damn day! They just wouldn't stop, see? They kept coming until night! It was either a surprise attack or some great bargain sale I had yet to hear about! This town, whatever it's called, it's popular for those or something, huh? Not that anyone gave me a heads up about it. Who are you calling an orc? Oh, oh, yeah, there were orcs, or orc-faced things, you know, a lot of the old dudes around here look like them—"
Does it matter if anyone told you about it?! At least tell us if a massive group of monsters shows up! I thought, quickly growing upset. Anyway, people aren't orcs! Don't lump them together!
"I mean, I guess they were orcs? I'm trying to explain. I beat them up. They showed up, right? That's right, they kept showing up. They were after the freebie, whatever it was—yeah, a monster beating! I had to put 'em in their place! So, right, so I kept beating them up, but I never got my freebie! I'm the victim here! I got nothing, nothing at all, even though I cleared the

goal… Huh? Clear? Well, I cleared the orc king? Right. Yes. No? Then they played me for a sucker! I'm telling you, they just kept coming! I put in so much work! All that on top of starving half to death. Huh? No, what I'm *saying* is that I beat them up, that's all! What'd I do wrong? Wouldn't you beat up a monster if it just showed up in your face? That's right, I'm the good guy here. You'd beat them up! Everyone here would, right?"

No one understood a word he was saying…me included. Sure, he used real words, and made actual sentences out of them. But thinking back, every time Haruka-kun claimed that he didn't do anything wrong, he was usually the undeniable culprit. He hadn't been innocent a single time since coming to this world. The truth always pointed to one culprit, one perpetrator, and it was always Haruka-kun.

As the sun broke over the horizon, we gathered before Haruka-kun, witnessing his confession. We soon found the scene of the crime: a mountain of spellstones and clubs. The monster corpses had already disappeared. It turned out that the cores of the monster corpses would vanish on their own eventually, even if left undestroyed, and would leave behind spellstones. Destroying the core right away meant that the spellstones appeared immediately.

The crime of mass murder had been committed here, at this very scene. Certainly, it was unusual to consider the person who repelled a massive horde of monsters as anything but a hero, much less a criminal. In this case, though, we had to take Haruka-kun's criminal record into account. He exterminated the monsters, and far from pretending like he hadn't done it, he acted like he hadn't even *known* that he did it! Then, to top it all off, he started selling fish at a ridiculous profit!

He was also a repeat offender. A repeat offender of the most incredible, ridiculous, preposterous magnitude! He committed the crime of failing to reflect on his past crimes at all! He was in a constant state of being caught red-handed for his crimes, as well as the crime of not reflecting on the crimes he'd committed!

I declare your sentence forthwith! Scolding!

DAY 27
NOON
They were popping up like Whack-a-Moles, so why not whack ‘em?
OMUI GUILD

I PULLED AN ALL-NIGHTER LAST NIGHT. That sure was rough. They dragged me back to the guild even though I was exhausted; I got an unfair sentence, even though I didn’t do anything wrong!

I got a fresh scolding when I got back to the inn, too. I guess I shouldn’t be surprised by now. It probably bears no repeating due to how completely and totally obvious it is, a simple fact of life, a basic tenet of existence, but let me state the real, whole truth for the record anyway: I absolutely and utterly did nothing wrong. Not the slightest thing. So why were they always mad at me?

I accepted my punishment, but it didn’t change the fact that I’d been falsely accused! I gave them what should have been an alibi—that I was busy beating up monsters at the time—and they still got mad at me! I tried to explain: “No one told me there was a monster outbreak. No one told me there was a mass invasion. Not even the goblins. So how was I supposed to know? The kobolds didn’t tell me! They don’t just casually say, ‘Yeah, we’re kinda in the middle of a major rampage right now,’ do they?” That should’ve been more than enough to prove my innocence, and yet they got mad at me. Totally unfair, right?

At the guild, the punishment for my false accusation was wreaked anew. “How could I go inform anyone about the monsters?” I complained. “I was in the middle of beating them up, I couldn’t get up and leave! I was really busy, super busy, with those streams of consecutive beatings—I swear, I was beating them like a darn maniac!”

They responded to that with outrage. What a deplorable state! Shouldn’t the law remain unswayed by emotion, determined only by reason and logic? If feelings got in the way of the law, then it wouldn’t be law at all. They should listen to my statement, instead: my actual-factual, well-reasoned statement that proved my innocence!

“Do you tell a bunch of villagers under attack by monsters to hurry up and tell someone about it? That’s plain cruel! Does an innocent villager getting his head munched on by a kobold toddle over to let someone else know? You wouldn’t get mad those villagers! So you shouldn’t be mad at me. I’m telling you, I tried asking the monsters to let me go home!”

Huh? They were *still* mad at me? Why wasn’t my reason and logic shining through? There must be some fatal flaw occurring with my translation into

the native language, I thought. Then I realized most of the people mad at me were my own classmates.
“I only sold the fish because people begged me to,” I said. “And I only cooked more because they were hungry, and I felt bad for them! Sure, I made a profit, so sue me! It was tasty, wasn’t it?”
They were *still* still mad at me?
“Those monsters stampeded out at me, one after another, out of the trees! All I could do was beat ’em up, one after another. It was basically a beatdown festival! Beating was all I could do—I was slamming beasts out of the air like some kind of Beat Saviour! They were popping up like Whack-a-Moles, so why not whack ’em? Ya know, gotta whack ’em all? Wouldn’t you?”
That point didn’t seem to resonate either. Why they heck was everyone out for my blood?
“Uh, Haruka-kun.” The guild master was speaking. “As the leader of this guild, allow me to thank you for stopping that stampede of monsters. Really, thanks. Our town would’ve been in deep trouble against such a horde, and many adventurers and soldiers would surely have died in the fight. You saved us.”
The guild master looked like he didn’t know how to continue, for some reason. When he did start speaking again, it was like he was broken and stuck in a loop. He wasn’t making much progress, so I sneakily slid by him, dived downstairs and questioned the next person bound to get mad at me—the receptionist.
“I think I can explain,” she said. “Usually, when there is a monster outbreak, the guild and the city soldiers repel the monsters and collect the spellstones. The guild then purchases the whole sum. I count that sum, naturally. After that, half of the profit goes to the adventurers, divided according to their rank, and the rest is split between the guild and the town. The town uses the funds to repair city walls and what not, and the guild splits up their portion between the injured and dead, and covers the cost of any necessary counterattacks.”
So the receptionists here *did* have jobs other than what was posted on the bulletin board! I guess it was different because they were receptionists?
All that seems pretty normal, I thought. What’s the problem?
“So why’d the old guild dude go all whack and keep repeating himself a million times?”
“About that…all of those rules of the guild don’t apply to non-members. This time, the guild prepared to defend the city and repel the monsters, and the adventurers waited all day to fight them, too…but no monsters showed up. They were destroyed in a brutal mass-murder, and none of them made it to the town.”
Yeah, because I was the monster-beatin’ master! But still, no reward…? Seriously, none whatsoever? I’d been screwed out of what I was owed! I was the victim here!

I was the reason the adventurers didn't get to fight, and the real problem was that they waited around all day but didn't get any earnings at the end of it. I didn't blame them for feeling sore about that, since they ponied up 500 ele each to get some of that fish.
Then the city walls didn't suffer a single scratch. Duh, because the monsters didn't reach the city walls in the first place. Heck, even if they had, I'd feel bad that the monsters caught the blame for the decrepitude of those old-ass walls. Not their fault this city wasn't that popular.
"What you're saying is that"—I said after thinking very hard about it—"it's unfortunate that this backwater town couldn't become a big hit with the monsters? I get it, I get it!"
"Where in the world did you get that from?" exclaimed the receptionist. "In my discussion of damages and compensation and systematic routines, did you think we were trying to blame the monsters? Did I say anything about that?!"
Okay, so I was wrong. She went on to say that the problem was that even though the guild didn't suffer any damage, it went to the trouble of building fences and making a watchfire, and sure, they definitely spent money doing that. It couldn't have been too much, though; they all bought fish from me, after all.
"And since I'm not an adventurer, I wasn't even invited, and wasn't going to get a cut of the money anyways…? I certainly don't remember being invited. Can't you just tell me what the darn problem is?"
The receptionist let out a long sigh. "*That* is exactly the problem."
Even though I took care of all of the monsters, and it would've been impossible for me to collect all the spellstones and weapons on my own, for some reason, collecting all the spoils was a necessary step. From what the receptionist told me, had the guild collected the loot, they couldn't split the profit with me since I wasn't an adventurer. I was the one who killed the monsters, though, leaving them unsure what to do.
"I don't need that stuff either way," I said. "The guild master told me I'd get a prize from town."
I *did* take the most valuable spellstone and weapons from the boss and king that I had beaten. They looked like they'd have a good chunk of monetary value once converted. Anyways, there were way too many weapons and stones for one guy to loot, plus I made a ton of money from the fish. I really didn't need anything else, but for some reason, the guild master was having trouble accepting it. I told him I didn't need the rest, that I'd leave the decision to the duke and the guild, and I ran out of there as fast as I could. The conversation had gone on for, like, years!
Before I left, the receptionist gave me my second installment from the first round of spellstones I gave the guild. This time it was 10 million ele. My money was only confiscated from me yesterday, but now, I had five times that!

When I showed her the few spellstones I did collect, she got all flustered and started bowing again. I had a fresh 10 million ele from them, so I didn't need anything else.
Last time, the guild couldn't pay the full amount for all my spellstones, and that stopped them from buying any more spellstones from me. In the meantime, I kept accumulating more and more spellstones and had nothing to do with them. I had all this capital that I couldn't turn into cash.
They ended up making another special exception to purchase the spellstones from me, but as soon as I went over to the trade-in counter, the woman there, who was smiling mere moments before, spasmed in horror.
She was so young! Was she really experiencing facial nerve pain?
Being a receptionist was a tough business, huh? They all looked like they had their fair share of troubles nowadays.
"Overtime again…" she grumbled to herself miserably. "Work, work, work…and yet again, it's all his fault…"
They must be having a tough time keeping up with counting all the spellstones from the stampede, meaning they needed to work overtime.
There would be no mercy from me. I poured out my spellstones onto the counter in a fresh mountain, and she burst into a fresh bout of tears.
"No need to rush with my portion," I said. "This is all extra baggage to me. You can tell the guild master I told you that."
"No!" she shouted. "It will be done as my utmost priority! The other adventurers can wait! They're too busy eating fish!"
She smiled widely and took the spellstones in good humor. I appreciated how hard she was going to work for my sake. So how come the boss receptionist behind her look mad? He was giving off a pretty scary aura.
Then a dreadful wail echoed through the guild. Sounded like the receptionist's overtime was extended again. Hey, that meant that they were doing some great business! Who knew that running a fantasy guild was so profitable?
Aside from the spellstones, now I had to deal with the massive volume of clubs I'd collected. I jabbered to the club shop man that I didn't need them and dashed off. Old dudes love talking, and I wasn't in the mood to listen.
That volume of clubs would last him a lifetime! Talk about a bounty!
I wondered what the club-to-person ratio was in this town, anyways.
Walking down the street, almost everyone was wearing a club on their hip.
If the old dude could sell all those clubs in this climate, this town would become something fearsome.
If he did sell them all, there'd probably be 10 clubs per person. It'd be a town of clubs, not people. Any goblin in their right mind would run as far away from that town as they could; they wouldn't attack it even if you asked them to. Sooner or later, the place would be called Club Town. I swore to bounce before that happened. A town like that was guaranteed to be even more dangerous than the forest.

DAY 27
NOON
You hop on the whacking bandwagon and still have the nerve to lecture the OG?
DUNGEON MEETING

HARUKA-KUN SHOWED UP at the guild at last, so the rest of us did a dungeon raid. While we were at it, we vigorously investigated the truth to deduce what had really happened. His confession still didn't make a whole lot of sense.
"Seriously, doesn't he have the skill 'Corporate Proactiveness'? What does that do? It certainly isn't helping now!" growled Vice Rep A.
"He keeps throwing himself into crazy dangerous situations, too! Why does have try to do everything himself? And *why doesn't he remember anyone's name?!"* cried Shimazaki-san.
Everyone was mad at him. That last complaint may have been a separate issue, but everyone was still mad at him. I didn't think changing his skills would rehabilitate him either. It wasn't an issue with Corporate Proactiveness; the issue lay with Haruka-kun.
"I was sure that he got lost in the dungeon somewhere, but instead, he went straight for the stampede. He's crazy."
"A few days ago, I saw an orc at the forest exit—well, a pile of dead orcs," said the book club president. "So I set up an event flag to tag the location and keep an eye on things. Now it's obvious that it's a complete massacre there!"
"It's better than him going to the dungeon, even so. He'd definitely, 100 percent fall right to the bottom!"
"So what if he did? We'd probably see him the next day and he'd say, 'Well, I fell, and then I just kinda…climbed out, I guess?'"
"That's exactly what he'd say!"
Haruka-kun had evidently tried to do the right thing by staying away from the dungeon, and instead, he ended up fighting the stampede of monsters by himself.
"How did he not realize it was a monster stampede?"
"He was talking about how the monsters were out shopping for deals, right?"
"He kept insisting it wasn't a stampede because he only saw one at a time! Is this guy for real?!"
"Yeah, he said one came out from between the trees at a time, over and over and over again. He'd only recognize them as a cohesive group if they all lined up together," said Chika-chan.

You all should know by now that there's no use getting a serious answer out of Haruka-kun, I thought. Of course they didn't all leave at the same time in one giant group; it was a monster stampede. Stampede being the operative word. As much as he might plead innocent with his ridiculous logic, he was the guy who played a Whack-A-Mole session with a stampede of monsters. He'd been convicted of a monster-beating injury suit in my court!
"He killed them all, even the kings."
"It must have been one high-speed beating," calculated book club president.
"More than a few monsters per second."
"Then he was all like, 'Well they're the ones who attacked me, I'm the real victim here!'" giggled Vice Rep B.
"Victims usually don't commit massacres, right? Not usually?"
Our group meeting had collapsed into a venting session without warning. We couldn't think of any slander that would actually get to Haruka-kun's head, even so. We lacked the vocabulary, the words, even metaphors that would do the job.
"What was he trying to say about Omui being popular among monsters? That they must be advertising it, or something?"
He was trying to blame it on the duke's daughter as usual. They had stomped their feet together for some reason, like they were suddenly fast friends.
"And *why* did he think he was going to get some sorta prize? What did he mean by monster master? Some game thing? He kept talking about being the very best monster master."
"He meant that he was on a winning streak. That's why he said his beating rhythm was perfect, and that he had to whack 'em all."
"What's even the point…?"
We all sighed in unison. The accused had put forth his incomprehensible defense. Forget whether it was true or not…the statement itself was totally incomprehensible.
"Didn't we, like, decide to protect Haruka-kun?" asked Vice Rep B. "What does he even need protecting from?"
There was a murmur of agreement. She wasn't wrong. The monsters were the ones that needed protection…from him. The real victims here were the poor monsters. This ghastly massacre was reason for us to start monster protection drills.
"If there's something that *he* needs protection from, we're totally screwed," said Vice Rep A, and everyone nodded.
Did he break through that nasty level wall? *He made such quick work of king monsters!*
"He says he's just like a commoner in this world, but the monster kings would get massacred every time they tried to pass through a town if that's what commoners are like, right?"

“Now you sound like you really do want to protect the monsters. A basic bozo like him might turn them all into endangered species… What is wrong with this world?!”
“Haruka-kun is, like, basic?! The monsters are screwed!” Shimazaki-san and her friends shouted.
A world with infinitely strong commoners didn’t need heroes. The monsters were the real ones at risk in a world like that. At risk of extinction, maybe.
“Did you notice how most of the villagers have started to carry clubs around?” whispered Vice Rep C. “Maybe they’re going to form a mob! Could Haruka-kun be their master?!”
“Don’t be fooled! Haruka-kun is the only person who’s insanely strong like that—they’re just normal people!”
This town had certainly gotten safer. All of the villagers had weapons to fight if necessary.
“Those clubs are really powerful ones, too, aren’t they?”
“The club shop in town—the ex-armory, I mean—started doing really good business all of a sudden.”
“I even saw little kids playing with clubs in front of the inn!” said Vice Rep B. “Soooo cute!”
“I don’t think we need to worry about protecting this town,” said Vice Rep A.
“Stay away, monsters, for your own safety!”
Omui was now a dangerous place for monsters. This wasn’t a major destination for them; it was the site of a major massacre. No big giveaways or shopping sprees awaited them here. Their fate was a bloody massacre where they’d be turned into spellstones, then sold at the guild.
“Didn’t Haruka-kun also mention Villager A being super strong?”
“Villager A? Doesn’t get much more generic villager than that…so the commoners here *are* insanely powerful!”
We landed not in a world of swords and magic, but in a land of clubs and carnage. God could’ve summoned a bunch of cavemen here to beat up the goblins with clubs instead of us.
As we continued our discussion, we made our way back up through the dungeon’s maze and toward town. Peering closely at everyone back at the inn, I saw that many of them had bought clubs of their own. *Seriously?! Your job is Swordfighter! Is this some sort of twisted trend? Is the Whack-A-Monster Challenge what’s bringing the clout nowadays?*
I ended up buying one myself. Should I join the bludgeon brigade, too? Yep—and I’ll start with the guy behind this. I’ll throw in a good, stern lecture for free!

DAY 27
AFTERNOON
Anyone'd be surprised to see love, friendship, and courage on the store shelves.
OMUI GUILD

I GOT SUMMONED TO the guild master's office, where I listened to him talk about a bunch of stuff, escaped, and then finally finished up selling my spellstones at the trade-in counter on the first floor. I ran into the spear dude there. He accused me of ruining his life and a bunch of other stuff. I completely ignored him, and asked him what was going on with that shady store. The owner hadn't come back, even though my sex appeal was still hidden somewhere in that store. My sweet, sweet sex appeal.

The spear guy started to tell me his gossip, when—wait a second, how did so many—like, *so*, so many—old men get involved in this story? The sausage ratio was way too high. Was it time to grill these old guys to a crisp?

Wait, that's it—could it be that…I was summoned to this world to eradicate old men once and for all?!

Based on what spear-dude told me, basically all of the mysterious items came from dungeons, so they were reasonably priced. Sometimes, the owner would sell right outside of the dungeon.

"Are you for real?" I demanded. "For-real for real? For really reals, really reals, for-reals? For real, fo-rumors, from for-real sources? Pinky promise? If you're lying, I'll break your finger? Fo' sho', fo' sho'? You don't mind broken fingers? What about a broken face?"

I could buy it—my sweet sex appeal—right now! Right this second, I could buy one, two, three—well, no, since there was only one. I sensed that one wouldn't be enough. The girls were *still* mad at me!

He seemed to dislike the idea of broken fingers and also the idea of a broken face. What an egotistical dude.

"Yo, nerds! Otaku!" I cried. "OTA-KU! O.T.A! Tell me everything you know about the dungeon, tell me fast—tell me now—top-speed, spit it out! If you don't, I'll set the mean girls loose on you! They'll take big bites right out of your heads, and you know it! Spit it out! Fast!"

Jeez, those were some slow nerds. They kept dweebing about at such a languid pace—couldn't they speed it up? The Pheromone Ring was calling out my name from the dungeon even as we spoke!

They looked offended.

"I thought I was Nerd A?" one demanded. "If you're flipping to *otaku*, well, OTA isn't much of an abbreviation. You're missing the second A, besides; I should be OTA A. We already made up with Shimazaki-san and her friends,

by the way. They were grateful, they gave us heartfelt thank-yous! Don’t set them loose on us!”
“Forget all that,” I snapped. “Just gimme the info! The goods! Tell me already, or I’ll set the meatheads loose on you, too! All five of ’em! Are you guys idiots?! Spill!”
“What’s your problem?” another one said. “We’re saying that we *made up with them*, so you can’t use them as a threat against us! Same thing goes with Kakizaki-kun and his friends. They apologized properly and everything! Now you’re just insulting us! Don’t tell me you forgot all of our names again?”
I had demanded answers from OTA A, snatched info from OTA B, and forced an explanation out of OTA C. Meanwhile, OTA D looked perfectly happy.
“So I’m Nerd B?” Nerd B looked disappointed. “I’m pretty sure I was A before…”
“What’d you call me? OTC?” Nerd C asked. “What am I, ETC’s companion? And are we nerds or otaku?! You can’t keep switching between terms like that!”

Then they turned on Nerd D. “Don’t just stand there with a stupid grin on your face! Stand up for us!”
Couldn’t they be a little more understanding of my situation? My sex appeal was at stake here! My sweet damsel, Little Miss Sex Appeal, all alone in the deep, dark, lonely maze of the dungeon…waiting for me!
“Nerds could never be friends with someone like ETC!” I shouted. “Et cetera’s social standing is way too high! You own ETC an apology! ETC always comes in handy, unlike OTC! What is OTC, anyways? Over the counter?”
What were they blathering about, anyway? I had shopping to do. I got the nerds to make me a shopping list so I could take it to the lady at the general store and she could help me find everything. If I didn’t hurry, my sex appeal might…I couldn’t bear to think about it. *My beautiful sex appeal…*
Then the soldiers got mad at me. *Why?!* They tried to tell me that I couldn’t fly through town. Write it down on a sign then, goddamn it! How was I supposed to know? There was no signage! How would anyone know not to fly? Blame the government’s lack of responsibility, not mine. I was in a huge hurry, after all!

I arrived at the general store at last. I was primed and pumped to get my shopping done at max speed.
“Hey! Lady! Give me everything on this list. And fast!”
I had to be well-prepared. The dungeon was reportedly more of a labyrinth, so it’d be easy to get lost. If it was an ordinary cave, that would be even more dangerous; I might make renovations and end up living there.
“Everything on here?” She read the list and glanced up at me. “You’ve written down ‘Love and courage and friendship.’ We don’t sell that here.”
On my way back to the dungeon, I’m going to walk all over those nerds, I thought furiously. Trample them, mash them, cook ’em in a stew! I’d skip the maze altogether if I could buy love for a retail price! For real! Where do they sell it? That’s what I really want to know!
“You also have ‘Rope with an infinite length, because you’ll definitely fall off the cliff.’ We have rope, but it’s the finite kind! How come you’re planning to fall off a cliff, anyway?”
I had no interest in falling off a cliff, but maybe on my return trip, I’d kick those nerds off one straight into the depths of hell. *Talk about a half-assed solution!*
“And ‘friends,’” she continued. “You can’t buy those anywhere, and definitely not here.”
Now they’ve done it, I thought. They were starting a fight with a loner, and they’d get what they deserved! I was ready to resort to Flame Whorl! That’s right, Hair Whorl! So what if they went bald for all eternity?
“We don’t have ‘common sense’ either,” she said. “Wait, let me check… nope, of course we don’t.”

What kind of list did they make me?! Just a bunch of insults?! Why would ‘common sense’ be of any use in a dungeon? Those nerds were the ones lacking in ‘common sense.’ *I swear, the complete disrespect!*

“I can get some of the small stuff on here…but we’re fresh out of ‘a scolding, preferably from Class Rep.’”

I would have to force those guys to sit down and explain to me what, or rather *who the hell exactly* they think I am. I needed a numbered list of things to ask them to explain their own stupid list!

Why would I go to the dungeon to get scolded? Who wanted that in a dungeon? *Is a lecture waiting for me there on the bottom floor? No thanks, not for me, gotta pass on this one.* What in the world would make me want to willingly cross a dungeon for a lecture when I had twenty people’s worth of those back at the inn! I didn’t need a scolding; there were plenty of those on standby, right this moment! Why was I cursed with this unrelenting scolding, anyway? *Time for a nerd hunt.*

When I got back to the inn, the nerds had already fled.

Trying to hunt them took a lot of time and effort, so I ended up not going to the dungeon. When I did catch them, they were desperate not to lose their hair, but I stretched those forcefields they put around their heads to the damn limit. Screw those cheat abilities! I was so close to burning their hair to ashes…

DAY 27
NIGHT
No matter the challenge, enough fleeing, dodging, coaxing, and deceiving will see it through.
THE WHITE LOSER INN
MEETING

ODA-KUN AND HIS FRIENDS were all crying when we got back to the inn. Which was odd, since they shouldn't be getting bullied any more. They were strong enough that no one ought to mess with them in the first place. Weren't they the strongest people in this world?
Oda-kun and his friends told us what happened, sobbing all the while.
"To sum it up, Haruka-kun wants to go to the dungeon alone," said Oda-kun. "We bought some time, but next time, he's gonna burn our hair off!"
"We barely held him off! It took three max-power forcefields from a Sorcerer, a Saint, and a Guardian to stop him, and we *still* nearly got burnt to a crisp!"
"I'd be bald as an egg right now if I hadn't spammed Shield Ninjutsu!"
"How is he that strong?! He froze our legs to the ground so we couldn't run away! That sort of magic shouldn't even exist!"
"I'm a Sorcerer and I can't even do magic like that. It's unfair!"
"We were terrified," Oda-kun concluded, wiping his tears away. "He's way worse than any Demon King, way, way worse."
They were sopping wet from all the crying by the end of it. They probably wouldn't mind going back to our old world and getting bullied again; even that paled in comparison to what they went through. And these were the scariest possible kids that you could choose to bully, in any world! Telling Haruka-kun he needed 'common sense' might have crossed a line. Common sense was his natural enemy, his sworn nemesis.
Today, Oda-kun managed to stop him, but he was headed for the dungeon. A dungeon that only top-class adventurers dared to enter, and even those adventurers tended to form parties. Haruka-kun, however, was determined to go alone.
"I'm worried about him," Oda-kun said.
"Me too!"
"Super worried!"
"I mean…who wouldn't be?"
"Imagine fighting off those waves of monsters in the dungeon alone," Oda-kun said, shaking his head. "Wasn't he battling a stampede all day yesterday?"
"Why wouldn't you at least try to get a group to go along with you? He's got the time!"

We were all worried about him. But at the same time…it was kind of impossible to worry about him for real. Maybe that was a dangerous way to think, but at this point, I couldn't see how anything would go wrong. *Are dungeons even dangerous?*

Of course dungeons were dangerous…except in Haruka-kun's case, where the *dungeon* was the one in danger! He might tear the whole thing down. Tearing it down would be dangerous to him, too. So while there was danger afoot, the real question was how would it show up? *What am I even saying?!*

"We tried to explain to him that it's not like a lottery! Getting unlucky won't just mean losing out on a prize! It's more like the inverse of…you know that Gundam quote? 'It doesn't matter how powerful they are if they can't hit you'? But he didn't seem to get it…"

"The whole problem is the level wall! Dodging his way through isn't the answer!"

Because he was weak, Haruka-kun focused on developing a method of fighting that allowed him to dodge all of his opponents attacks. He grew evasion skills but neglected endurance ones. Most of all, his inability to level-up became a massive handicap that only made each fight increasingly dangerous.

"You can't just solve everything by fleeing, dodging, coaxing, and deceiving, y'know?" said Chika-chan. "Though, to be fair…it kinda feels like he *has* managed to solve everything by doing that."

Haruka-kun hadn't solved his problem at the root. He cheated his way through it, sidestepped it, used smoke and mirrors to smash his way past it, caught it in a trap and beat it to death in a surprise attack, and just plain ridiculed it. *I'm starting to feel bad for the problem here.*

In conclusion, Haruka-kun was still frail. No change there. However strong he looked, no matter how dominant he seemed, and even though he had come back to us every time so far and told us that everything was okay, he still wasn't safe. His life was in danger to this day.

The monsters' lives were in far greater danger in this case, though. Seriously, why was he like this?

DAY 27
NIGHT
Pastries are the only force that can best this egregious phenomenon.
THE WHITE LOSER INN

I REGRETTED LETTING THE NERDS slip away. When I chased them back to the inn, Class Rep and the others were downright terrifying. It forever and always remains the deepest of mysteries as to why, but yet again, as usual, they were mad at me.
This world, along with its truths and tales, it logic itself, was filled to the brim with incomprehensible mysteries. And the greatest and most impenetrable of all those mysteries was why everyone was always scolding me! Pastries were the only force that could best this egregious phenomenon.
I had to get some appeal. The situation was obviously dire. Just how low is my sex appeal right now? Could be in the negative by now. Why else would they be so angry?
I needed that Pheromone Ring. I had to go into the dungeon. Into the deepest hollows of that dungeon, where my sex appeal awaited me. I must travel there, plumb its depths, and investigate until I found it. *Where are you, sex appeal?*
Wait, I realized I should check my stats. I nearly forgot all about them.

NAME: Haruka
RACE: Human
LV: 12
JOB: —
HP: 186
MP: 195
VIT: 173
POW: 178
SPE: 191
DEX: 189
MIN: 197
INT: 205
LUK: MAX (Above Limit)
SP: 527
COMBAT: Cane Mastery Lv9, Evasion Lv9, Ascertainment Lv1, Foresight Lv9, Magic Infusion Lv9, Life or Death Lv4, Rapid Movement Lv3, Bend not Break Lv1

MAGIC: Heat Lv5, Movement Lv8, Weight Lv8, Packing Lv8, Four Elements Lv7, Wood Lv7, Lightning Lv6, Ice Lv5
SKILLS: General Health Lv7, Sensitivity Lv6, Calisthenics Lv9, Walking Lv9, Servitude Lv6, Appraisal Lv9, Clairvoyance Lv8, Presence Detection Lv9, Enemy Tracking Lv9, Magic Manipulation Lv9, Presence Concealment Lv7, Stealth Lv8, Hiding Lv9, Map Lv6, Focus Lv9, Physics Resistance Lv8, MP Regeneration Lv9, Stamina Regeneration Lv9, Parallel Thinking Lv8, Serial Thinking Lv8, High-Speed Thinking Lv8, Dash Lv6, Airwalk Lv6, Lightspeed Lv7, God's Eye Lv3, Mimicry Lv1
TITLES: Shut-In Lv6, NEET Lv6, Loner Lv6, Sorcerer Lv9
ABILITIES: Corporate Proactiveness Lv5, Master of None Lv7, Blockhead Lv7
EQUIPMENT: Wooden Stick?, Clothes Set?, Leather Glove?, Leather Boots?, Cloak?, Contact Lenses?, Ring of the Destitute, Item Bag, Monster Bracelet Power+39% Speed+26%, Vitality+19%, Black Hat

A level up! I didn't know when I had leveled up. I hadn't kept track at all lately.
It was easy to check my status when I was alone in my cave, but I never got any alone time in town. I would try to check whenever I had a moment to spare, but with all those items and numbers to deal with, I completely lost track of what went up and when.
I had no idea what level whatever-his-name-was was, but I assumed he gave me a ton of experience. Add in that big monster beating, and it made sense I'd gained a level… I was still clueless about how level-ups worked. Was I the only one left in the dark?
Ascertainment was new. Maybe it was a new stage of Foresight? I still had Foresight, though… Going back to level 1 for a similar skill felt kinda cruddy. Looking at the rest of my skills, a lot of them had gone up to level 9. I had no idea if they would hit a max or promote into a new stage or something whenever they hit level 10.
I also had "Bend not Break." I think that one reduced incoming damage… I read about it in a book once. It made direct, oncoming attacks deal fierce damage, but the tradeoff was that bending back against an attack could sap the attack of its strength. It made sense for there to be a skill like that, but did it count as a defensive skill? Or an evasive one?
And how about "Mimicry?" Did it work together with Ascertainment to identify and then copy an opponent's skill? That'd be a natural fit with my Master of None ability…but I didn't exactly want to remember Bite or anything like that. What, was I gonna be chomping into my enemies' heads next? *No, please, no, I don't want to be exchanging bites with those monsters!*

My Monster Bracelet continued to power up smoothly. Orcs gave it a vitality bonus, too. I desperately needed more of that vitality. Right now, the tiniest nick from an opponent would kill me. Talk about a serious handicap.
I used Hair Whorl on the nerds, but thankfully, that hadn’t turned it into an actual skill. I was starting to feel bad for calling it that, actually. Maybe I owe Flame Whorl an apology. Anyway, it didn’t have any effect on the nerds, so whatever.

DAY 28
MORNING
Just what're you hoping to discuss with all the kobolds you've been killing?
THE WHITE LOSER INN

EVERYONE GOT TOGETHER and had breakfast. As usual, we surrounded Haruka-kun; we knew by now how precious and limited these moments with him were. So we surrounded him this morning—and attacked!

We took turns grilling him over breakfast. It wasn't all that necessary, since we already knew how he felt before he committed his various criminal acts, but we asked all the same: What exactly was he trying to do? What was he trying to pull? We were desperate to drag an answer out of him before he pulled it off and we all suffered the consequences. The nerds had told us for certain that he was trying to get into the dungeon yesterday.

"Hey, Haruka-kun?" I called, smiling. "Are you gonna go to the dungeon?"

"Yup, I finished prep and everything," he replied. "I want treasure and stuff, so like, it's more like I'm going to the treasure chests. Catch my drift?"

He was going to the…treasure chests? Going to *get* the treasure chests? So the dungeon was just an excuse.

"You shouldn't go by yourself! It's really dangerous, probably," I stuttered, unsure what to say.

"The dungeon is really dangerous, probably," Vice Rep A chimed in.

"Yeah, it's, like, *really* dangerous, probably… For sure!" agreed Vice Rep B.

We were trying to stop him, so why couldn't we just tell him that it was flat-out dangerous?

"It's got something I really need in there, though," he said. "So I should go, yeah?"

Something he needed? That meant he had bigger plans than just going to the dungeon. That wasn't good news.

"What do you need in the dungeon?" I asked.

Why wouldn't he just buy it? He had plenty of money.

"Well, it's a dungeon thing, like a dungeon-only sale? Kinda? Dungeon-exclusive? Dungeon-limited?"

An item that you could only buy in the dungeon? Was he implying that there were shops…in the dungeon? People were lining up to buy exclusive dungeon products? What?! Was he gonna say that there were midnight launches, too?

"If it's a weapon or armor item, won't there be a minimum level required for you to use it?"

I knew that Haruka-kun was still under level 20. *He has no reason to go after any weapons or armor*, I thought.

“Well,” Haruka-kun said, “I should be able to use this thing. It’s got a, uh, lax level wall, see?”
I remembered something. *Does he mean…he’s after the Pheromone Ring?!* Not that! He was after the ring that increased your appeal to the opposite sex!
When we first went to that store, I got mad at him for wasting so much money, but the equipment he bought there probably saved his life. I was grateful for that. Without it, he wouldn’t have come back—he wouldn’t have survived. He would’ve died in the cave, and never came back to us, nor to me.
But…but a Pheromone Ring?! He didn’t need that! It has no productive use, for crying out loud! It’s for increasing your sex appeal!
“Why don’t you just tell me what you’re looking for?” I said. “Please don’t tell me it’s the Pheromone Ring!”
Haruka-kun shook his head back and forth like a robot. Yep, the jig was up. “N-n-no w-way! Wh-wh-what’s a Pher-Pheromone Ring? I’m looking for a Ph-Ph-Ph—Solomon’s R-Ring! Swear on my life! S-So-Solo-Solomon’s Ring! It, uh, lets you speak to animals, heck, goblins, no trouble! Then I can talk to kobolds too, I’m sayin’…on the double? Duh! I wanna speak to kobolds! They’re—so gold, with a canine flow. I wanna get the downlow, ya know? Fo’ sho’? Kobolds are always spittin’ solo, straight glow? Am I right, all right? Mic check? One, two?”
Is he…rapping? What was wrong with him? He wasn’t rhyming by accident! It was like he’d been practicing!
The Pheromone Ring must be in the dungeon, I thought. *Time to burn that thing to the ground.* The dungeon, of course! And the Pheromone Ring! What was up with the rest of it, anyways? Mic check? There were no microphones in this world! And why would Haruka-kun need to chat to kobolds? He would kill them all before they even got the chance to talk! His kobold pals are all already dead! He hardly gave them the chance to open their mouths, much less admire their flow!
This is bad. We need a meeting. An emergency meeting!
Would we have to destroy the dungeon at all costs? Emergency measures were necessary. This is a command from your Class Rep: “Prepare emergency measures to destroy the dungeon!”

DAY 28
MORNING
Isn’t that a problem for the fantasy-world water-management bureau?
THE WHITE LOSER INN
EMERGENCY MEETING

HARUKA-KUN HAD ALREADY LEFT the inn. I called for an emergency resolution to finish the meeting in time.
“I know for sure that he’s after the Pheromone Ring,” I said, concluding my explanation, “a ring that, supposedly, increases your appeal with the opposite sex. I say we destroy the dungeon! Any objections?”
“None!” cried everyone.
That settled it. We were going to destroy the dungeon.Everyone agreed in a unanimous vote, not that I would’ve allowed for any dissent!
“We can’t destroy the dungeon!” Oda-kun suddenly cried. Everyone looked over at him and his friends; they usually didn’t participate in our meetings.
“The guild and the townspeople will get so mad at us!” agreed one of his friends.
“Why do they wanna destroy the dungeon over a ring?”
“That dungeon is really dangerous—you shouldn’t try to mess with it!”
“Oh, you mean because of what happened in those old legends about the dungeon?”
Why did the nerd brigade bother showing up to argue now? They explained that the “best things in the world” come out of the dungeon. The way I saw it, that made it an even more dangerous place, even more worthy of destruction.
“Actually, I’m sure Haruka-kun said the reason he wants to get the Pheromone Ring is because everyone always gets mad at him even when he didn’t do anything wrong,” said Oda-kun. “That’s why he wants more sex appeal. Right?”
Why did the nerds believe Haruka-kun when he said he didn’t do anything wrong?! It sounded, if anything, like Haruka-kun was misconstruing everything as everyone else’s fault!
Just what did he want to do with more sex appeal, anyway? Did…did Haruka-kun want to make an isekai harem? No, no way. Probably not. When all twenty of us stayed at his cave, he wanted us out and fled to hide in his tent. When we went to join him there, he shoved himself flat against the wall, as far away from us as possible. If he did form a harem, he’d end up running away from it in seconds!
He even turned Shimazaki-san and four of her friends into his slaves. He had the power to do something creepy at any time if he wanted. He could

have forced the most popular, beautiful models in our school to do whatever he pleased…but he didn't. He spent most of his time running away from the girls in our class instead!

He clearly had no interest in making girls do what he wanted, or even in remembering our names. I couldn't sense the slightest interest from him in the latter, for sure. And anyway, Shimazaki-san and her friends would do whatever Haruka-kun wanted; he didn't need Servitude. They'd throw their lives away for him if he asked. In my opinion they were a little too eager to do just that.

So what was his endgame plan, here? Why in the world did he need that ring?

Unless…unless he really, seriously, thought we scolded him because he didn't have enough sex appeal?!

How incredibly, astoundingly stupid…but I think he honestly believes it! Now that I think more about it, that's exactly what he thinks! He always considered himself innocent, for one.

He's definitely thinking, "Everyone always gets mad at me, so I wanna get the ring! You know what I mean?" What an idiot!

What we did barely counted as a scolding! After everything he put all of us through—worrying us half to death, making us cry, making us lose all hope, and then still coming home safe—of course we cried on his behalf and made a scene. He thinks that counts as being mad at him?!

At least I knew now that he wouldn't do anything gross with the ring. That was good; one cause for concern off the table. Still, it was dangerous for him to try to get it. And by that I mean he was in danger of endangering himself to a dangerous degree!

I mean, maybe Haruka-kun would enslave us. That was a possibility. But what would be more likely is that we willingly became his servants, rather than him using Servitude. We were devoted followers of his. We believed in him. He was the reason we were still alive! When we lost everything, when we were in the depths of despair, when we gave up on our last hopes, Haruka-kun made us smile again. He taught us how to survive like it was easy.

Him getting the Pheromone Ring would be dangerous to *us!* We couldn't handle him with boosted sex appeal! All I could sense from that outcome was danger at every turn.

What's more, Haruka-kun likely hadn't realized the most dangerous risk of all. He didn't see what things were like after he left, nor what happened to everyone the night he left, when we thought he would never return.

Haruka-kun couldn't conceive that the inn and this town would be in danger of flooding from everyone's tears. If he left for good, our tears might drown this whole crazy world.

DAY 28
MORNING
Why is everyone so dissatisfied with my remarkable architectural talents?
THE PLAIN

I *ESCAPED FROM THE INN! What's my next move? Roger?* Why was I trying to send a message in the first place? It wasn't like anyone was around to receive it, what with me being a loner—*why do I keep reminding myself about it?!*

It was a mysterious mystery for sure. I mean, why would gaining sex appeal be dangerous in any way? That Class Rep's *glare* was way more dangerous than any ring could be! And I was sure she was glaring because of my lack of sex appeal. Ugh, what a mess!

How did she find out what I was after? And why was she mad at me for it? Maybe…maybe she no longer needed a *reason* to get mad at me?! That would be a new low. *I'm so sorry, Sir Sex Appeal!*

The bar had fallen so low that it was almost certainly underground. My sex appeal was lying at the bottommost bottom of the dungeon. How much further could it fall?! Had it fallen far enough that it had started digging its own deeper dungeon? *I gotta rescue it, fast!*

I approached the dungeon and saw there was a gatekeeper. *My mortal nemesis.* Every gatekeeper in this world who I'd met so far got mad at me, for reasons I had yet to figure out. My same-sex appeal must also be pretty low. Not that I needed much of that.

Normally, you had to apply for dungeon entry from the guild to get in, but they said they wouldn't let me in even if I applied. Maybe my level was too low, maybe I lacked sex appeal, maybe the receptionists resented me for making them work overtime, or maybe it was because I wasn't an official adventurer. Regardless, they wouldn't give me permission.

I had a bad feeling that I'd get caught as usual if I tried to sneak by him. I couldn't simply walk straight in without a crowd to blend into either. I needed someone else, anyone else, to enter, so I could slip in behind them. *With my Invisibility Cloak, level 7 Presence Concealment, and level 8 Stealth, I should have no problem sneaking around!* But no one else showed up. Was this dungeon not the place to be? My sex appeal was in this very dungeon, though. Did the dungeon itself have a problem with my appeal? Or was my appeal that unappealing to everyone? How could they treat my sex appeal this way!

This was going beyond the pale. I was about ready to launch an attack on the town; I couldn't let them get away with treating my sex appeal like that. Should I target the Adventurers' Guild first?

Then a bunch of my classmates suddenly showed up. They were carrying a ton of rope for some reason. What was this, bungee jumping?
“Uh, why are you guys here? Isn’t this your day off?”
You need to be an adult in Japan to go bungee jumping, but they were all just high schoolers. Did they all turn into adults out of nowhere? Don’t tell me…did they find the beautiful elf Akemi-san’s shady store and become *adult adults?! Tell me where the store is already!*
“We knew you’d come here!” they shouted at me.
“Uh, duh. It’s mine, obviously? This is the dungeon where it’s held! At the bottom floor! That’s why I gotta go get it, you dig?”
This was basic stuff. I couldn’t understand why they didn’t seem to get it.
“Haruka-kun, it’s been here since long before you came to this world,” Class Rep said.
Now that’s a low blow, Class Rep!
“You’re telling me that my sex appeal fell into the dungeon before we even got here?!” I cried. “It’s been buried deep underground all this time?” It made sense in a way… I had never had much sex appeal back in the real world. Or…at all. I was about to cry!
“This *place* has been here since long before you were born, Haruka-kun! And your appeal hasn’t gone into the dungeon! No kind of appeal is worth that kind of risk, anyways! Do you think sex appeal is the dungeon boss or something?!”
It was hard to believe. My sex appeal lay here, in this fantasy world, before I was even born. That must have been why I ended up here: to recover my sex appeal! It had felt like I couldn’t find my sex appeal no matter how hard I looked…but for it have been taken since before I was born?! *Haven’t I been punished enough?!* Anyway! There was one mystery solved!
It might vanish into the next world if I didn’t dash to rescue it right away—*please god, don’t move my sex appeal again. I’ve looked so hard for it!*
The others streamed into the dungeon, so I snuck in behind them. Well. I actually wandered in alongside them…but you know what I mean.
I entered the fantasy world’s dungeon for the very first time!
It looked no different from an ordinary cave! Should I make some renovations and set up a new place here? It would be way cheaper than the inn! I wasn’t a fan of people I didn’t know regularly passing through, though. Would I have to make them tea? Start a dungeon tea shop? I could probably make a ton of money doing it…
“I think this would make for a nice living area,” I commented. “And hey, it comes with a basement!”
“It’s a literal underground dungeon!” my classmates shouted at me. “This is not your house! You can’t live here!”
“Why would the first thing you say about a dungeon be about how you can turn it into your house? Are you gonna invite some monster friends over? As customers?!”
Turns out I couldn’t live here.

“But look, there’s a nice long entrance area, and then it bends into a nice L-shaped living area… If you excavated the wall here, you could get a grand foyer vibe, don’t you think? Especially if you made the ceiling a little higher. What do you say?”
It seemed like a good idea to me.
“Why are you designing the dungeon into a palace? Are you an architect or something? Is this for the emperor?! Here?!”
“Please don’t take it upon yourself to renovate the dungeon!” scolded Class Rep. “The first floor is just a straight path, so it wouldn’t be a big deal—well, no, it would be a big deal, but from the second floor onward, everyone worked super hard to make dungeon maps. If you make it into a mansion, everyone’s going to be really mad at you!”
“Those stairs aren’t an entrance hall, and the underground isn’t a basement! It’s a labyrinth! Don’t you dare think about making the underground areas into a palace either. The adventurers would freak out!”
“We can master the dungeon by renovating it!” I exclaimed. “It’s the perfect plan to capture the monsters by building them a house! This just might work!”
“We’re trying to tell you that it’s impossible, and you’re talking about trying to sell monsters some real estate? What would monsters even do with a mortgage?!”
“I don’t know about that… My cave had a pretty narrow entrance, so I couldn’t do much with it. It was more of a one-room type, y’know? But this place has much more potential,” I said.
“He’s already planning it! Dungeon, get away from him as far as you can! Ugh, oh, no! Dungeons can’t run!”
They were right on that count.
“It wasn’t easy to build my own house in this world, you know,” I said to my classmates. “It was really hard to make it! No joke!”
They responded in a chorus:
“Just why do you think we came here?! To reform homes?! What is wrong with you?!”
Every time I started to make a few tweaks to the dungeon, they got mad at me. For the time being, I leveled the floor to make it nice and flat. Sneakily, of course.
“Is it just me, or did it suddenly get easier to walk?” one of my classmates called. “Did somebody start renovating? Somebody, as in we-all-know-who?”
“I can totally sense some magic behind that wall,” said Vice Rep B.
“Haruka-kun, don’t tell me you’re, like, making a bedroom in there?”
“The dungeon entrance is a sleek stairway now, too. It wasn’t like that before, was it?”
I should’ve expected that even my sneakiest sneaks wouldn’t get past my cheat-skill-wielding classmates.
“Uh…no way!” I said. “I think the dungeon is, uh, growing…? It’s going through dungeon puberty, and getting bigger…”

“You’re not allowed to turn this dungeon into a palace!” they yelled at me. “Just what are you trying to do?!”
“Well, um, I’m making it into a World Heritage Site! Duh!”
That would be my new goal. Bring more tourists into this dungeon.
“Tourists aren’t allowed here! Tourists can’t enjoy the sights while fighting off hordes of monsters! Are you assuming that the tourists are invincible?!”
I could sell monster-flavored chips at the entrance! That would rake in a profit. Tourists who enjoyed chips made out of dead monsters sounded pretty scary, admittedly.
“You say you’re doing renovations…but the walls and ceiling are swallowing up the monsters as we go? Are you building a haunted house? Are you gonna have us dress up as the monsters? We’re meant to be fighting them!”
“Don’t humor him—that’s what he wants!” shouted Nerd A. “Just ignore the monsters stuck in the walls…those poor, poor monsters…”
“Ooh,” I said, “This’d make for good housebuilding material!”
“Don’t even think about it!”
We were out in the dungeon, but everyone was as loud and annoyingas ever. We were in public! I wish they’d learn some manners.
“Look!” I exclaimed. “This would make the perfect accent wall for a walk-in closet!”
“*We—are—not—building a house!”* screamed everyone. “No closets! You’ll freak out the adventurers!”
They had a point: with a closet here, I’d worry that the nudist girl would start stripping in front of everybody. She’d be in trouble if she took off her equipment. The monsters would be surprised, too.
“Let me guess, you think a dungeon doesn’t need accent walls? Yeah, you might mistake it for a trap…that’d be no good.”
“We’ve barely made it out of the first floor. We haven’t fought a single monster yet…but I’m so, so tired. I wonder why?”
Huh. I made the floor flat, so it should’ve been easier to walk. Why were they *more* tired?
“I could make a declining ramp,” I offered. “So you can easily access the lower levels. You can’t see between the rooms that way, but—”
“Don’t we keep telling you to not make anything?” Class Rep said. “Please, please don’t! We might end up living here if you turn it into a palace, and then we’ll need to fight off any adventurers that come here!”
Good point. If I wanted to make this floor suited for repelling invaders, then I ought to leave some of the wall. Arrange the layout perfectly enough, and I could create the optimal ambush!
“We could design the first floor based on defensive encampments, if that’s what you’re worried about. Make sure you have to go through the defense to get to the living area—”
“Who wants to pass through a battlefield to get to their own living room?! That’s not relaxing at all! No one wants to watch a battle from their living

room! Why would we fight off the other adventurers, anyway?! They're our allies! Why are we defending the dungeon?!"
They didn't much like that idea either. All of a something strange happened —where was I? Everything was black, and all I could see was the wall… Was I in the wall? What the—*Ahhhhhhh!*

DAY 28
NOON
I thought it was a dungeon trap, but nope, it's a psychological trap. Better develop some nerd-head meteors.
THE DUNGEON
THE BOTTOM FLOOR

"THOSE USELESS NERDS! Their so-called experience! They told me to wear a *helmet?!* How about full body armor?! I'll burn *their* helmets! …I guess I did already try that."

I was shocked. How could anyone have fallen off the ledge there? I know I did, but that's not the point! And was that a pit in the middle of a wall? A closed-up trap of some sort? Don't tell me—a trap that only springs when someone tries to make renovations to the first floor? I bet no one had ever triggered it before me. No wonder there was such a poor state of housing in this world; no one knew how to renovate!

"All right, you caught me! I fell! What floor am I at? The bottom? Are you there, my dear appeal? Sex appeal?"

Shouldn't I have died falling such a big distance? I thought. There probably wasn't anyone else here, in that case. So where was my sex appeal?

If I didn't use Airwalk just in time, I would've died. The bigger problem was the fact that there was a pitfall in the first place. If it was a cliff, I would never have fallen because I had Airwalk.

So I was in a deep pit.

A vertical pit.

A narrow pit.

With smooth, slippery walls.

Airwalk was for walking on the air, so I had to be in the air. I could only use it alongside forward momentum, hence why I wasn't concerned about any cliffs. But I couldn't even get off the ground here. If I tried to get forward momentum, I'd force my face into the wall and grind away at it until I had enough space. *No way am I doing that!*

"The hole is too small to make a spiral staircase or something, too," I said aloud.

Since the walls were slippery, I couldn't climb up the face of them either. Say I did get off the ground and used Airwalk, I wouldn't have enough magic power to get back to the surface. That'd be one difficult combination of skills.

"They told me I'd fall off a cliff! But *no*, it's a *pit*! Who gets their information this wrong?! They must've left this trap for me! On purpose!"

Thanks to their bad information, I was fully focused on avoiding a cliff ledge. I would've been totally perfectly fine if there'd been a cliff here!
"Goddamn it! They made me focus on cliff ledges! They didn't say anything about pitfall traps! Wait, is this a psychological trap? The nerds *are* after me! I'll roast them to kingdom come later!"
On the way down here, I pinged a massive, gigantic…something, I guess via Presence Detection. Checking my stats revealed that I gained a skill called Midair Analyze. *Bet that'll be useful in my planning and renovations*, I thought. What bugged me was that I had *also* gotten the skill Trap Detection. *Because I fell down a pitfall?* That was the only possible reason I could've gotten it. Too damn late! What's the use in getting Trap Detection *after you fall into a trap?!* I'm already trapped! And yeah, I detected it! Hard not to, in this situation!
I was sure it was a perfectly good skill, and it might save my butt later. Tell me, though, was there anything more frustrating than knowing how to detect traps immediately after falling into one?! I was seriously pissed off!
I scanned the surrounding dungeon area with Area Analyze. *A tunnel going straight…* and then a dead end? No, that can't be. I saw a door…*is that a large public bath?* Maybe I'd find some hot springs if I dug around.
Judging by how long I fell for, I was pretty far underground. So it'd be pretty risky to open a hot spring down here. You'd have to fall down a giant pit to get to it from the surface, and marching all the way back up was bound to make you chilly. Not to mention, you'd be drenched in sweat the second you reached the top!
"I guess I'd better go this way. It's a nice straight path, like the first floor. Isn't this supposed to be a labyrinth?"
I went down the tunnel. Narrow, cramped, and dark. Maybe it needed some renovations? Like, for real?
"A long tunnel…maybe a passageway? A tunnel-esque passageway?" I gasped. "Unless it's a maze! No, what am I saying, it's a straight path! Every path has been completely straight! I even brought a dungeon map but there's no darn need for it! I can use Area Analyze, anyway, so I'll never get lost!"
I stumbled down the long passageway, so long and so straight that I had no chance of losing my way. If I got lost here, I'd probably get a No Sense of Direction skill, or more likely a No Damn Sense of Anything skill. I got bored pretty fast, so I made some renovations as I went. Don't tell anybody.
This never-ending oppressive atmosphere…this atmosphere! I realized it felt familiar, kind of like the air when I was deep in the forest. The swirling presence of dense magic lay ahead.
At last, I came to the end of the road. A giant door. The foreboding presence lay on the other side. *A round…public bath?* It felt like a large bowl, like a massive colosseum or stadium. The heavy atmosphere meant I could at least rule out baseball. Though maybe I could have ruled that out based on common sense alone.

I'd find out what was up with the place if I opened the door. If I didn't, I wouldn't.
There would probably be no turning back once I opened it. But what other choice did I have? Not opening it might be even worse!
I gave a polite knock. *Manners are always important*, I thought. If I was lucky, someone would respond and peek out to see who it was. Then I could get the jump on them with a preemptive strike! Too bad, I didn't hear anything, not even a "Come in," so I could tell this wasn't a job interview. Score off another possibility. I had my stick in hand, ready to beat the crap out of my potential interviewer, but so much for that. I had to open the door myself.
"I'm coming in? I'm coming…don't be all like 'Ah! You pervert!' or anything, 'kay? I warned you officially that I'm coming in!"
Had there been something on the other side that was worth calling me a pervert over, I wouldn't have minded. I'd be pretty pleased, to be honest. But what was beyond those doors made me the very opposite of pleased.
The bottom floor of the dungeon was a large round room, like a steel colosseum—the perfect place for a boss fight.
I never saw anything like this in a Japanese video game before, though. Then again, I wasn't in Japan anymore. Maybe this was a show? Something like "Forest Boss Kobold vs. Dungeon Boss Goblin?" *I might even stick around and watch that!*
The door was massive and made of stone. It looked like it had never been opened.
"Pardon me," I called. "Pardon me, Mr. Monster? What's the point of being polite to a vicious monster anyways?"
I shouldn't have expected a giant public bath. Only monsters tended to show up around here, and I couldn't see them being into personal hygiene. I guess I might run into a goblin that was all "Ah! You pervert!" That would be unfortunate. I'd heat up the water fast and boil that goblin alive!
"What kind of crazy world puts a level 12 NEET against a dungeon boss, anyways? You wanna make someone fall, try the nerds! Then I could chuck rocks at them from above, at least!"
I'd set those rocks alight before dropping them off the ledge. They'd burn hot enough to melt! I'd make meteors that would sear the scalps of every nerd beneath me! Serves them right!
There was a heavy creak as the door opened again. *Hello?*
The atmosphere shifted. The presence within made itself known to the world, despite lurking in the deepest, darkest pit of the dungeon. This place was the last stop before hell, and presumably my ultimate demise as well. Was I gonna greet my first ever dungeon in a fantasy world by facing its final boss?
Why meeee?
And while we're asking questions, where the hell is my sex appeal?!

Don’t tell me that my sex appeal had dive bombed even lower than this?! It should’ve already been too low to fall any further… Y*ikes, that is a bitter burn.*
Well, there I was at the lowest level, awaiting my demise. The door opened all the way.

DAY 28
NOON
I should've been a tragic figure, so how come this is a comedy now?
THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
FIRST FLOOR

WE TRIED SO HARD to pay attention to him, and we even hauled along an extremely long rope just in case of emergencies, but he still fell.
"Oh, no! He's gone, isn't he?"
"So it's over?"
"I couldn't hear anything from down there. Is he okay?"
"That pit looks pretty deep. Did he fall to the very bottom?"
Uh, guys? We should be worried!
Oda-kun and his friends looked upset. "I could've sworn it was a cliff! But it wasn't!"
"How completely unexpected! A pitfall, right in the middle of the wall…"
"I never even thought of that. *Inside* the wall? Should we be shocked that someone devised such a trap, or shocked that Haruka-kun got caught by it?"
"Now that I think about it, there aren't any cliffs in the dungeon!"
C'mon, seriously! We're supposed to be scared!
"Who sticks a pitfall trap in the middle of the wall?"
"Who *falls* into a pitfall trap in the middle of the wall?!"
"Haruka-kun is the only person who would ever fall into one!"
"What genius sets a trap like that *inside* the wall?!"
Vice Rep B was making a lot of commotion, as always.
"It's gotta be a trap designed specifically for Haruka-kun, right?"
"Yeah, that thing would never catch anyone usually."
"It got him perfectly! Incredible!"
"It is pretty impressive. Like, he just got sucked in…and then dropped down it, I guess?"
"Do you think it's against the rules to renovate the dungeon? So all his fixer-uppering is what triggered it?"
"That means he's responsible for what happened! Again!" everyone shouted.
They all sound more exhausted than anything else…
"I guess we should go look for him."
"Are you kidding? After a fall from that height? The guy's toast."
"Most people would be, yeah. His scream went on for ages."
"But this is Haruka-kun! Doesn't he have that skill? Airwalk?"
"He literally pissed the guards off yesterday by flying across the city."

“He’s not supposed to have any cheat skills! What is he doing, flying around like a bird?!”
Sounds like everyone here has Haruka-kun’s number.
“It’s pretty tragic that he insisted on coming. We told him he would fall.”
“Tragic for sure, but getting caught in a trap like that…it’s kinda comedic, too?”
“I wonder if the dungeon boss is okay.”
They’re worried about the dungeon boss?!
“He’ll probably come back all like ‘I fell down, so I blew up the dungeon boss into smithereens, but, like, no biggie.’”
“Totally!”
Worrying about the dungeon boss was one thing, but now everyone was tearing up with laughter at Haruka-kun’s expense.
“Still, there is that one rumor we heard…”
Everyone’s expressions dimmed as one. Oda-kun led us to this dungeon so we could level up efficiently, and it was tough enough at the highest-level floors. It was a world away from most other dungeons in difficulty—that’s why we could level up so fast from the very beginning here.
“Well, they say it’s there…at least according to the rumor?”
“Come on, no way is there a monster down there!”
This dungeon was known as the oldest dungeon of all; entrance was stringently restricted by the guild according to rank. What made it such an effective place to level up was what made it so dangerous… And, of course, there was that rumor.
“Forget about the rumor! The Dungeon King at the bottom floor is the real deal. That thing is way too strong for us to take on right now,” said one of Oda-kun’s friends.
“But what about…what about *that*?”
Every dungeon has its share of strange rumors: legends of antiquity, of heroes as well as their tragedies. We could usually dismiss those as being pure fabrication. The legend of this dungeon’s bottom floor, though, was another matter.
“No one’s even *been* to the bottom floor, right? So we can’t really know what’s down there!”
“Even *in* the legend no one made it to the bottom,” said Oda-kun. “Our progress is the farthest into this dungeon in recorded history.”
These rumors alone would be enough to make us cry with worry over anyone who fell to the bottom of this dungeon…so long as they weren’t named Haruka.
“I heard that a legendary hero’s body got corrupted down there, and it decayed into a Supreme Emperor that rules all Dungeon Kings…”
“That’s what I heard, too! There are tons of different versions of the same story, but at the heart of it is a king that surpasses all other kings. Another version claims that the body of the hero guards the dungeon.”

I knew Haruka-kun would be totally fine. At the same time, I was downright terrified for him.
Why did we always have to be stuck worrying about him?!
“They say it governs all the other dungeons in this area. That it’s the king of kings of dungeons.”
“It’s only a rumor. Isn’t there some weird rumor about emperor class monsters who rule over the king class monsters? It’s that nonsense recycled, case closed!”
That’s ridiculous, I thought, if there was anything as strong as that, then the world would be destroyed in an instant; it’s just a rumor, just a fanciful, nightmarish rumor. Right then, I remembered—
“Didn’t Haruka-kun mention off-hand that he defeated a goblin emperor before?!” cried the mean girls.
Impossibly powerful “emperors” of legend, monsters capable of leveling an entire country…and Haruka-kun had already confessed to killing one. Add it to his list of crimes.
We had every right to be furious with him if he acted this recklessly! No one could judge us! Except for Haruka-kun, of course, who point-blank refused to see anything from our perspective.
No doubt about it, he was searching for his sex appeal at the bottom floor of the dungeon, right at this very moment. And as he did so, he brought our entire class to the verge of tears out of sheer worry.

DAY 28

Just an itsy, bitsy, teeny, weeny, tiny, little smidgen.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
BOTTOM FLOOR

IT WAS BLACK. A pitch-black void darker than anything I'd ever seen. *Is this darkness's shadow?*

A black, all dark, all shadow—the shadow of a person.

Calling their shadow black felt like an understatement. Their shadow was a darkness that sucked up and crushed all the light from the world.

I was wearing my own black hooded cloak, so I was something of a pitch-black, suspicious figure myself. All the girls got mad at me about it. All they ever did was yell at and scold me, so they'd probably scold this shadow person, too.

I used Appraisal.

NAME: —
RACE: Dullahan, Lich, Deathking
LV: 100
JOB: Ultimate Dungeon - Dungeon Emperor
HP: —
MP: —
VIT: —
POW: —
SPE: —
DEX: —
MIN: —
INT: —
LUK: —
SP: —
COMBAT SKILLS: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
MAGIC: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
SKILLS: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
TITLES: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
ABILITIES: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
EQUIPMENT: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Was Appraisal appraising anything? Was this a bug? All it told me was its job… *Why does this bag of question marks get a job and I don't?!* And an Emperor job at that!

It was strong, but that went without saying. It was level 100 and had an ominous presence to match that number. I couldn't tell how strong, though. I took it as a given that its stats towered over mine.
Were those three different races? As far as I could see, the only race it would belong to was "Shadow."
Dullahan were headless horsemen, so why did this shadow definitely have a head?
Lich referred to powerful magic users, a class or so above a Sorcerer or a Sage.
Deathking, the final term, must refer to one who'd conquered death, or a being that would never die.
Then there were all the little question marks. I couldn't see its combat skills, magic, or skills…and it even had titles and abilities.
It must have been super overpowered. Unbeatable. I bet the nerds couldn't touch it even if they all banded together. Not an unbeatable, cheat-slaying monster like whatever-his-name-was—this was pure, raw strength.
There was no justification for why it was so strong. It simply was.
That was only the first of my problems. Question marks! Nothing but question marks! I couldn't tell what attacks it could use, or what kind of effects its skills would have. It had three races, so it was impossible to narrow down the possibilities!
My Wooden Stick? also had question marks, but all that told me was that special or powerful objects or skills eventually turned into question marks after using Appraisal. Basically, the one thing that the question marks told me about this Deathking was that it was stupid strong. Normally with my "Contacts?" I could see the stats of even high-level monsters, so I was decently impressed to encounter something beyond those limits. Everything about this thing—its skills, its magic, its equipment—was off the chart.
Worst of all, judging from its three races alone, it was guaranteed to be powerful from both close and long-range, wicked fast, and intelligent beyond compare. Even its dexterity and luck were out of my Appraisal's range.
I knew at least I would have the better luck stat, but that was always the case. *Holy hell, this thing is strong.*

In spite of it all, I opened the door, entered the room, and walked toward it. *It has the abilities of a lich and Deathking*, I thought, *so I'm screwed if it attacks from a distance, end of story.* Those classes practically spelled out that it'd be invincible to magic. It was freaking immortal, for crying out loud!
I wasn't confident that I could beat a dullahan, either. Still, I was sure I could batter it to death given long enough, even if it was resistant to physical attacks.
But as I approached, I saw it had a sword. I could tell it was a strong one, too.

This was a monster from another world altogether.It was a fearsome god of death, but there was something striking, even beautiful, about the way it stood there.
I walked in front of it. Staring into the holes in the skull where the eyes should be, I saw only darkness, though that darkness seemed to return my gaze. Then the distance between us vanished.

One more step and our swords would meet—well, its sword and my Wooden Stick?—but still, a meeting of swords! I extended my staff fully and stabbed toward it, aiming for its weak point, where it would be difficult to dodge in time.

A flash—it moved faster than I could even catch with God's Eye, pure speed, pure beauty. It feinted and deliberately paused for an opening before resuming its blinding speed, now behind me in a gentle flash of light, stabbing at me again. I saw what it was doing somehow, but I also couldn't keep track of it at all.

Its movements eliminated all excess—all reserve motions, all preliminary motions, all unnecessary motions, every drop of unneeded strength, every spare thought, every ounce of excess. It just attacked.

That was all there was to it. Raw slashing, slicing, stabbing.

This was the speed of a true god. Every moment, each and every instant, was expended in an attack.

By the time it moved, its move was already over. There was no gap between the start and the end; the moment it began stabbing me, from my perspective, I experienced nothing but the "end" portion.

The God's Eye ability like allowed me to see the future—just a little, bitsy, tiny, wee smidgen into the future. Inside that ittiest-bittiest smidgen, we crossed swords. Or I assumed we crossed swords. I couldn't see what happened. The attack was done before my eyes finished processing what was going on.

I attacked its insentient body, slashed away at its sword in the midst of a vast fog. In that instant, we had battled for an eternity, crossed swords from the dawn of the universe to its end, a never-ending moment of indescribably fast, inexplicably precise slashing, stabbing, slicing.

Time melted away, I melted away with it, and in that melting fog, our swords alone danced.

I had no idea how much time actually passed. It didn't matter. I was stuck inside that infinite instant.

Unfortunately, I did have a limit. My stamina would run out at some point, and my MP would hit rock bottom as well. My mind and my consciousness would each reach their respective breaking points in the near future…but, crucially, not yet.

We set off fireworks in that dark room, and they were forever swallowed up by the blackness. Infinite clashing, clanging, all within the shortest possible interval of time.

We fought for what might have been a billion seconds—a decillion, a centillion. We fought for the duration of a single blink. But that duration itself was never-ending. Strength and speed had ceased to matter.

I let my mind and body call the attacks. We were fighting too fast for my body to act—my mind urged it to move. It was too fast for my mind to think—if I thought about my actions, I wouldn't respond in time. Something

faster than my consciousness controlled me, something beyond the body and the mind.
I was thinking faster than the limits of thought…my consciousness was sped up faster than I could form mental concepts. We fought within an infinity that had been chopped up into zero and stretched out to last for eternity.
As I stared into those vacant eye sockets, our swords clashed, clanged, and they shredded each other an infinite number of times.
In the midst of exchanging blows, I realized that I had no interest in killing this skull monster.
Our swords met in a flurry of sparks, an innumerable variety of dancing glints of light.
The skull monster's bloodthirst took root in the darkness, a darkness powerful enough to compel it to attack me.
As we continued to trade blows for eternity, though, fireworks began to color the darkness, burning a smoldering bouquet of white flowers in their wake.
This skull monster should be able to destroy me. Easily, instantly, a hundred times, a million times, enough times to fill up all of eternity—it should be able to kill me.
As we continued this eternity-spanning fight, we swept through an infinite variety of attacks, a thousand swings, a million blows.
A tremble—*was the darkness fading?* Slightly, weakly, barely—but definitely, it faded.
As our swords collided it grew hazy. Was my Wooden Stick? now splintering away the light-sucking darkness with each successive blow? Our wildly dancing swords heaved, puffed storms at each other in flight.
Was it divinity purging the eternal darkness, slice by slice?
Every time our swords clashed—
Every time our swords met—
As they slashed—
As they moved—
And attacked—
Just barely—

I didn't know when, but eventually…the darkness vanished.
I beat it out. I stamped it away. Finally, I realized that the skeleton couldn't bear it any longer. This skull knight was in conflict with the darkness…and that conflict had unleashed this monster. This skeleton thing was just one tiny fragment of the immense power behind the darkness… And that meant…
The still, vacant eye sockets of the skull stared back at me as I realized, at long last, what powered it.
This skeleton was waiting. Waiting, and waiting, and waiting…to die.
It was waiting for the day—the distant dream of a day—that someone would finally end it all.

It would never have let me cut it apart so easily otherwise. Possessed and controlled by the darkness as it was, it resisted it. It had been waiting for the one who would end it and the darkness behind it. It had waited, here, forever.
The skull knight had no intention of attacking me from the start, and that was what gave me a chance to defeat it.
The skull knight had no intention of harming me, and that was how I could face it in battle.
The skull had no intention of living. But that was why…
“Servitude,” I said.
I didn’t finish it off. Instead, I used Servitude.
I had no explanation for it, but I couldn’t bring myself to kill it off. Not after it finally got free from the darkness. I wanted to drag it out of here, at the very least. It was stuck here alone for so long, a loner trapped in the darkness. It was a loner, like me.

DAY 29
MORNING

The nerds and meatheads wanna save me from the pitfall?
I'd rather they work out online delivery for me.
THE WHITE LOSER INN

HE DIDN'T COME BACK LAST NIGHT. He did fall down a deep, dark pit, so it wouldn't have made much sense for him to show up…but now I was more nervous than yesterday. We all stayed up for the whole night, waiting for him, thinking, *There's no way he won't come back*. The whole class had red eyes.

It's his fault, I thought. He's the one who always puts himself in such dangerous situations.
"He'll come back, though, right?" everyone kept saying. "All like 'Uhh, well, I fell down and then I got back up somehow, you know how it is.'"
"Exactly!"
We managed to laugh about it last night. But night came and went, and he didn't return.
"He'll come back, right? He'll be all pissed off, saying 'those damn nerds kept me out all night!'"
"Yeah! He's gonna take out his anger on us!"
We kept envisioning the reactions he might have upon his return, even as we started to worry. But night came and went, and there was no sign of Haruka-kun.
The next morning, we all agreed that we'd go meet him at the dungeon. Cracking jokes as we went, we entered the dungeon again. He had rescued us before, and now it was our turn to rescue him!
We finished our preparations and returned to the farthest level we had reached so far.
"What is this, the 47th floor? Where is he?"
"How many floors does this dungeon even have?"
"I'll go to whatever floor it takes!" cried Fukunuki-san. "He deserves to get chewed out, and I wanna be the one who does it!"
"According to the legend, there are over 100 floors… No one's actually reached the bottom floor, though, so that info's as good as a fairy tale."
We continued descending, grumbling as we went. From the 46th floor downward, towards the bottommost floor where Haruka-kun landed.
"This is the furthest we've been, right? We won't have a map for any of the deeper floors after this. Do we need to search every single floor?"
"If we thought there would only 50 floors then that'd be plausible, but for 100…? Don't tell me we've gotta stay overnight."

We kept going, and our complaints accompanied every single step toward Haruka-kun.
Shimazaki-san and her friends said that their Servitude status hadn't disappeared, which meant that Haruka-kun was alive.
"This is bad enough without every floor being a maze! Why can't the floors be open-concept, so we can see what's on each one?"
"Then the monsters would have a clear shot at us! The maze forces them to attack us one at a time, so don't you think it's safer?"
Down and down we went. We'd find Haruka-kun eventually, there on the very bottom floor. So we proceeded, saying whatever came into our heads, and intently traipsed through the dungeon for him.
"No need to rush, we've got plenty left to go."
"I know that. Don't worry about me!"
The floors we crossed now came with large numbers of powerful, level-40+ monsters; monsters so strong that a single party wasn't enough to take them out. It wasn't easy-going anymore. Still, we kept fighting them as if they were nothing, because we all knew that Haruka-kun would be fighting his way back up to us. Poor Haruka-kun, who fought alone in the depths of this dungeon, amid a nest of powerful monsters. We were all desperate to get as close to him as we could.
Haruka-kun was waiting for us. No matter how strong the monsters were, or how many of them we faced, Haruka-kun lay beyond them. I would make it there so long as he was there to greet me. Everyone else felt the same way; no one had suggested we take a break. We would keep going, whether he lay on the 100th floor or the 1000th, until we made it to him.

DAY 29?

I shouldn't think too hard about this 17-year-old; it's not that deep.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
BOTTOM FLOOR

"UH...SO...EXCITED to work alongside you, Mr. Skeleton? Kinda?"

I shook hands with Mr. Skeleton. *Thank god,* I thought, breathing a sigh of relief that he wasn't mad about me using Servitude.

Sheesh, that was scary. I couldn't read his expression at all. Do skeletons even have expressions to be read? I didn't know if he could talk, but he seemed to get the gist of what I was saying. There was no way for me to know his real feelings on the situation. His expression didn't really change, see? *Like I said, he's literally a skeleton.*

One thing was for sure: he didn't seem to harbor ill will toward me. Maybe that was a side-effect of Servitude, but whatever the reason, that was the vague vibe he was putting down.

I also sensed that way, way, *way* deep down, Mr. Skeleton possessed great intelligence. Deeper down than the deepest depths of something deep, you could sense the teeniest hint of the most remote speck of intelligence. He wasn't nearly on the level of the meatheads, though. If the meatheads' smarts had been transported into this world, they were definitely buried way farther down than this.

Speaking of which, I was still worried about my precious sex appeal… Then I noticed that there was something wrong with Mr. Skeleton.

NAME: Angelica
RACE: Skeleton
LV: 01
JOB: —
AGE: 17
HP: 99
MP: 99
VIT: 99
POW: 99
SPE: 99
DEX: 99
MIN: 99
INT: 99
LUK: 99
SP: 0
COMBAT SKILLS: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

MAGIC: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
SKILLS: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
TITLES: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
ABILITIES: ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
EQUIPMENT:

He had his level reset? Does Servitude do that? I guess the mean girls were still at level 1 when I met them. Hang on, when were they gonna get released from Servitude?!
And he had a new name too. Angelica. Mr. Skeleton was a girl?!
Aw, nuts, now I've gone and enslaved another girl, I thought, *and this time, I did it on purpose!* I had no excuses for the police. Was there a problem with enslaving a skeleton? There shouldn't be, but I was certain that someone would find a way to get mad at me for it. Maybe it was just me?
The race had changed to "Skeleton?" Was that a demotion from being a dullahan, a lich, and a Deathking, since she was back at level one? How come it ended in a question mark?
And 17 years old? She was an immortal king of death just a few moments ago! Is she stuck at 17 forever now? Who is she, Kikuko Inoue?! The voice actress?! I mean, the skeleton can't talk, but…why does a skeleton need a voice actress?! I shouldn't think too hard on it; it's not that deep.
She didn't have a job either. We made a perfect pair…*nope, can it, don't bring up my joblessness!*
The Ultimate Dungeon Dungeon Emperor must have resigned from her job. Good thing, too, since it sounded like a total scam. I mean, an underground 24-hour, 7-days-per-week, unsalaried position? That's as shady as it gets! Pitch black! Buried in blackness! *That's a black company if I've ever seen one!*
All of her stats were level 99, so they must've reset along with the level. Maybe the stat max on a reset was 99?
Was this one of those "reborn in another world" gimmicks? Reborn as a *skeleton?!* That meant she got reborn, only to be already dead! *Fantasy worlds are a rich tapestry of things I can't understand.*
But even at level 1, all of her stats were 99. All of mine started at 10. Hers were 10 times what mine were! Talk about unfair! I had to work so hard in comparison…
And then, yep, those oh-so familiar question marks, as always. Chalk that up as another thing I couldn't decipher.
And even though she was back at level 1 and all her stats had been reset, I sensed a powerful aura about her. I could tell there was something incredible about her just from standing nearby. That didn't come from the stats, so maybe it had to do with a skill that I couldn't read…even though she was little more than a bunch of bones? Maybe strength was just baked into her bone marrow. At level 1! *Give me a break!*

What about the level wall? That accursed level wall? The other guys told me about that before, right? I couldn't remember. It definitely existed… probably?

Since I had fallen down here, I would reach the surface if I spent long enough traveling back up. The problem was figuring out just how deep I had fallen. It felt like a pretty long time. But the good news—or possibly the most catastrophic news yet—was that I had plenty of food. Plenty of food that I had no interest in eating, that I had accumulated by accident… mushrooms.

Oh, and the most serious problem of all was that you were supposed to get stronger as you progressed through the dungeon. I went straight to the strongest boss. *Yeah, that was totally unfair! I didn't mean to fall!* I had to reverse the order to climb up and out of the dungeon—meaning that the next floor would have the second-strongest monster here.

This was a whole new brand of suck. I had no chance of winning. I was toast. There were likely a whole bunch of monsters even stronger than goblin emperors. Victory was a fake idea, as far as I was concerned.

Now wasn't the time to level up Miss Skeleton, and since the next floor wouldn't have a boss—there would be more than one monster to face. I wasn't looking forward to this one bit.

DAY 29

If there's Crash-Proof or Crash-Immunity out there, then gimme! Right now!

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
BOTTOM FLOOR

I LOOKED UP AT THE DISTANT CEILING from the dark ground. It looked like a domed ceiling a ways up; the next floor was tucked somewhere out of sight.

Kerbonk!

Something fell down. Sheesh, that looked like that hurt! It was still alive, though. It looked like a hulking mashup of a bull and a human. A minotaur, maybe?

Oh, there were more.

Baboom!

Two more minotaurs to serve as my guides, although they were already on the verge of death. It was impressive that they didn't die despite falling from that height, if anything. Congrats, thicc minos! They must've had specialized stamina to survive that, and even then, they cut it close! Though now they were twitching, as if on the verge of death.

"Ohhh, now I see, they're wearing heavy armor! Armor with Physical Attack Immunity and Magic Deflection effects, too. Pretty strong, as well, level 99. But did the fall kill them?"

These bulls had the same overwhelming aura as the goblin emperor that I fought before. They were mooing weakly. I didn't know if it was because they had already been weakened by the fall or were about to die, or if it was because they were out of MP, but I could see all of their stats: they were all in the quadruple digits, ridiculously strong and sturdy, and topped off with a fair number of invincible skills. *They seem like they're on the verge of death despite all that, so what gives?*

"Does Physical Immunity not work for you guys? Maybe you need Crash-Proof or Crash-Immunity. That's Physical *Attack* Immunity, silly gooses!" I paused. "Wait a second! If there's Crash-Proof or Crash-Immunity out there, then gimme! Right now!"

Whatever. I whacked them a few times, leveling up Miss Skeleton a bunch in the process. A favorable development! But was something watching me? While I was finishing off the minotaurs, I got the strong sense that someone was watching me, and whoever it was wasn't impressed.

I gotta get out of here, I decided. The minotaurs had Revival abilities, for one thing. I couldn't spare a single move or moment. I hurried up and continued to whack the crap out of them.

The domed roof on the bottom floor was enormous. *How high is that ceiling?!* It had to be at least fifty-feet high. And I could forget about just

waltzing up there, since a huge stampede of invincible monsters were lying in wait for me. This game was impossible!
I sensed that if I went up to the next floor, I'd be the one who was getting the crap beaten out of him. Maybe I could make a hole in the ceiling, then drag all the monsters down here to beat the crap out of them first! It was either a genius idea, or plain old cattle abuse.
The thickset bulls plunged to the ground, blasted up a cloud of dust and debris, and miserably mooed, unable to endure the pain.
Incidentally, in front of the thicc minos was something called Living Armor, an unimaginably strong, practically invincible monster…or at least, in theory. In reality, this was more a series of tragic traffic accidents.
Yes, for in the fatal fall, the Living Armor's armor cracked apart. It was left as the little orb-like spirit that hid within invincible armor…and now it was rolling and clattering on the dungeon floor. So I whacked it with my Wooden Staff and shattered it. Y'know, as you do.
The armor had the effect Perfect Invincibility, so it should be essentially invincible. But now the Living Armor was also a victim here! Like, it was supposed to be totally immune from harm, right?! Its armor formed a complete defense against physical attacks, magic attacks, status conditions, everything. But it *wasn't* Crash-Proof! What a cheapskate definition of invincibility! That skill wasn't perfect by any measure! Sure, it might've completely nullified any physical attacks, but a little crash broke it into pieces. The armor itself didn't have a single scratch on it, but what was the point if it didn't protect the inside?!
It seemed that Living Armor was the official boss of the dungeon, while Miss Skeleton was more like the secret final boss afterward.
I looked over the armor: "Platinum Armor: Cursed. Absorbs the wearer's flesh and blood. Perfect Invincibility, Max Power-up, Guardian, ?, ?, ?." Now this was some cheat-code armor—except it didn't even *work*!
I put away the cursed armor in my bag to give to the nerd Guardian once I got back up, but I saw Miss Skeleton looking over at me. "Want to wear it?" I asked, and she nodded, so I gave it to her.
It made sense that a girl would want some clothes. She was a skeleton, but I bet she was uncomfortable to be naked either way. I'd really be in for it if they discovered I'd enslaved a naked 17-year-old girl; my sweet sex appeal would never recover! *She needs clothes at once!* "Cursed. Absorbs the wearer's flesh and blood" sounded a little disturbing, but she didn't have flesh or blood in the first place, and I asked her if she wanted it and she nodded, so it was probably fine.
The moment she put on the Platinum Armor—or, more accurately, dangled it over her bones—it instantly transformed from its previous bulky, muscular shape into a streamlined, gracious hour-glass shape. Even though the outside was metal and I knew only bones lay within, it was pretty sexy—*shh, don't tell anyone I said that!* Seriously, though, I could see every curve…

Miss Skeleton seemed pretty comfortable in it, as she picked up one of the minotaur's fallen massive swords right away got down to killing the other minotaur. *Good, great!*

So what was that glare I had felt on my back ever since the minotaurs started falling down here? Armor and skeletons couldn't glare at me! Was I ever going to understand anything about this dungeon?

Currently, Miss Skeleton was soaring across the room, her sword dancing through the air, cutting through minotaurs like a peerless master—*isn't she level 1?!*

By now the dungeon floor was littered with the corpses of the level 100 Living Armor and the level 99 minotaurs, so she must have leveled up a bunch. Made sense. At this rate, Miss Skeleton was sure to break through the clusters of minotaurs sooner or later… Although I worried that once she did, she would turn on me next.

Kerplunk! Kablooie! Boogyeeaa! Badadoooosh!

Still not over? How many thicc minos were we dealing with, here? Who was ever gonna make it past this floor? These minotaurs must have been around forever! No one stood a chance against them.

On the first floor of the dungeon, there had been level 1 goblins. That's when I fell down here, so I didn't know anything about the other floors. The dungeon emperor at the bottom floor was level 100, but so was the Living Armor on floor 99. And it had a seemingly never-ending group of level 99 minotaurs to back it up! Seriously, this level was impossible!

I guessed that this was either the 101st or 99th floor, but with no floor guide around, I couldn't verify anything. I couldn't ask the elevator girl either. Though that was only because there was no elevator. There was the pit that I fell down, but who expected to find an elevator girl in a pitfall? Then she'd fall, too, and then where would we be?

DAY 29

They're only gonna glare at me if I use linear, planar, and three-dimensional thought.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
BOTTOM FLOOR

IN THE END, there were one hundred minotaurs. Yep, one hundred of them fell down here.

They had every kind of weapon and armor you could imagine, as well as spellstones that would undoubtedly make me a fortune, but I was ages away from the guild—and even if I made it back, they likely wouldn't let me exchange them. If you could trounce monsters like these, you probably didn't need to exchange anything in the first place, right?

One hundred minotaurs and one Living Armor…? One hundred and one monsters in total? *That's way too many!* No one in the universe could possibly get past a hundred minotaurs and then the Living Armor on top of that! Anyone in their right mind would run away the second they got close to a ridiculous dungeon like this! *Classic fantasy world dungeon, completely incapable of reading the room!*

Seemed like the 99th floor was empty now. All the monsters fell off of it, and down to this floor.

Let's hurry up to that floor! The next group of monsters could come at any moment, I thought. I dashed up the stairs and saw that the 99th floor was covered in large holes…in fact, it was more holes than floor.

"This floor looks ready to collapse, doesn't it?" I said. "If the bottom floor was like this, we'd be in big trouble. This dungeon has no consideration for my safety! It doesn't even bother with the architectural fundamentals!"

Grumbling complaints the whole time, we walked across the 99th floor. There were so many gaping holes that you couldn't even begin to prepare the floor for renovations. What a wreck.

I couldn't comprehend it. Why did it feel like the armor and the skull were glaring at me? I definitely felt eyes on my back as we walked. It kept up a fresh stream of glares. I didn't stand a chance at parsing this world's zany rules. *Thanks, you've been a beautiful audience!*

The 99th floor had a much lower ceiling; as in, an average-height ceiling. It was probably too low for a fall to do any damage to whatever came crashing in, but it was worth a try. I used packing and Earth Magic to open a bunch of holes in the ceiling…and nothing came falling down.

I sensed something above. I used Appraisal, which identified some level 98 liches. These ghostly sorcerers floated above ground, so they didn't fall through the holes. These monsters had *no* consideration for others! *Are they in league with the nerds?!*

I took a closer look at those floating, socially inept liches who were fraternizing with the nerds. They were immune to physical attacks and only effected by Holy Magic. They were dark monsters with the most powerful classes in every type of magic besides holy. I couldn't use Holy Magic, but I did have my trusty wooden stick, and that worked fine on Miss Skeleton back when she was a lich—did that mean my Wooden Staff had a Holy element? I'd find out as soon as I stabbed them.

The liches easily passed through the holes in the floor, but didn't move to attack. Maybe they could only have one thought at a time… Or were they just stubborn?

I decided I'd use my Planar Thought and whack one with my stick. I stabbed it from below.

"Hellllooo! I know it's working, but can you at least scream or something?!"

The lich struggled against my stick for a moment or two, but it eventually vanished and turned into a spellstone. Because I stabbed it through a hole from below, upon turning into a spellstone, it fell down, all the way to the bottom floor. *Is this a game of catch or something?!*

The other lich stayed floating above me, and didn't even try to attack me through the hole. They appeared to be weak to three-dimensional thought. Still stuck on established theories and ideologies, perhaps… *Shouldn't monsters be a little more creative?!*

I continued to pierce holes in the floor and then stab upward through the holes. *Dig a hole, dig a hole, diggity diggity dig.* Why was I stuck doing literal manual labor in a fantasy world dungeon?

Miss Skeleton did me the favor of skillfully catching all of the falling spellstones. Impressive work, considering that she was glaring at me the whole time. Thanks to her help, we didn't have to trudge back downstairs to collect our haul of spellstones. One dropped down to the 100th floor, but we had collected about a hundred so far by then, so it was hard to care.

I chewed on some mushrooms while Miss Skeleton led me up to the 98th floor. *I guess she knows the way?* I knew that somewhere underneath she was just bones, but the tight-fitting armor she put on revealed her figure like something else. Long legs that ended in a high, thin waist. This was supposed to be armor, so why was there nowhere safe for me to rest my eyes? *Don't tell me…do I have an armor fetish?!* I'd never met a sexy, armor-clad girl before so I didn't know. I'd never even heard of a fetish like that!

Anyways, it was enough of a view to make the average high school boy explode. I'd been on the lookout for a shady "underground" store, but instead, I ended up in a shady, literally underground dungeon.

The 97th floor had moths. I was at a loss when I stabbed more holes and nothing fell through, but it all came together when I saw they were moths.

The atmosphere of the dungeon had changed significantly from when we were at the very bottom—there was no longer that same overwhelming sense of oppression. It made sense. Once you defeat the Dungeon King, the

dungeon should start to die away. The dungeon emperor was skipping out on her responsibilities now, so was the dungeon starting to die?
Then I saw a glittering…pollen? Powder? I used Appraisal and read the bad news: “Venom Moth, Lv: 97.” They scattered their scales, which inflicted poison and other status ailments. Now the scales were showering everywhere, because I’d opened up so many holes!
Did these even count as moths?!
I lobbed fireballs at them up through the holes, and soon it started raining monsters instead. I used the fireballs to round them up so I could wipe them out one at a time. Phew, they counted as regular old moths in the end.
“I think that’s all of them,” I said. “I don’t sense any other kind of presence here.”
Yikes! I felt Miss Skeleton’s glare. *If you don’t have eyes, you shouldn’t be allowed to glare like that!* How she managed it was a mystery. Listen, it’s not like there are light traps here in this world, you know? You need to resort to other methods.
“Those moths are totally unfair,” I said. “Poison *and* status ailments? You gotta kill them on first sight, otherwise you’re dead in seconds! Besides, they’re gross and stuff…”
We went up to the 97th floor while Miss Skeleton showered me in glares. *Her glaring power is off the charts!* I might need to start calling her Skeleton Rep. Or Lord Skeleton Rep. Even though she was supposed to be *my* servant.

DAY 29?

It’s not easy to roll through a dungeon! Why doesn’t anyone understand my struggle?

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
97TH FLOOR

SPELLSTONES WERE SCATTERED all over the 97th floor, piled up around the edges of the many holes. The venom moths finally burned up and died, I guess.

I didn’t want to touch or inhale the scales by accident, so to be safe, I incinerated everything as I advanced across the floor.

Behind me, Skeleton Rep gathered up the spellstones. She was still glaring at me. *Er, thanks?*

Then, without hesitation or a second of delay, I jabbed open more holes in the ceiling… *Are those caterpillars?* Did they grow up into venom moths? They had a similar pattern.

I used Appraisal: “Venom Crawler.” Welp, that settled it.

They attacked by spitting out thread that inflicted poison and other status ailments. One of their skills was Adhesion—if I got hit by the thread, it would likely immobilize me and then poison me. They were massive freaking caterpillars, to make matters worse. *Get me out of here! Forget status ailments—I’m in danger of a stomach fail-ment! I’m out!*

I could easily dispose of them once they fell on to the 97th floor, but it still took a while to take them out one by one. Downright annoying, to be honest. They were caterpillars! Giant *freaking* caterpillars! Caterpillars with dangerous thread, too. Or at least, thread that was comparatively dangerous for caterpillars.

I went up to the 96th floor. Skeleton Rep took the lead. I’d get her a nice cloak when we got back to town…because her armor was proving less than useless in hiding her ass, *it’s poisoning me! Is this her true attack?!* Getting a status ailment via exposure to a girl’s thicc ass—now that was wild. I was an innocent high school boy here, so exposure to Miss Skeleton’s backside had already altered my status somewhat. I definitely didn’t need those ailments to worsen.

I put my hand on the ground and made a giant cylinder out of Earth Magic. I matched it to the breadth of the passageway to conceal us. And then, I started rolling it ahead of us as we walked. Now we had a roller that ploughed ahead of us as we walked, although it made turning a real pain in the butt.

I used the roller to crush all of the caterpillars as we went. Behind me, Miss Skeleton Glare picked up spellstones as she went. Her glare was impressive enough to suit her brand-new title.

One problem: crushing the caterpillars left a sticky substance on the ground, which made it hard to walk when it started sticking to my feet, since it was adhesive and all—*and shoot, poisonous, too!* Sticky and poisonous made for a disastrously dangerous combo. We were both so low-level that we'd definitely die if we stopped moving. I had to get us out of this sticky situation somehow. *At least the caterpillars were slow enough that it wasn't an issue.*

After crushing the caterpillars with the roller, I drained the adhesive-poison-liquid into a hole and paved over it.

"That floor was a real pain," I sighed. "A real struggle…or a serious fight? Or rather, it took some serious construction. Some serious road construction, yeah! Can't the government take care of that stuff?!"

Nooo! The glare! That settled it, she was on Class Rep's level. She could easily join our class of glares and their fearsome glare power…and she didn't even have eyes!

The dark, narrow dungeon had knocked my senses out of whack: I had no idea what day or what time it was, or how much time had passed. I felt like it had been a while, but also…not all that long, somehow. I didn't need a break yet. I was keeping a fairly brisk pace, but I was worried about all the people up there who were worried about me.

A crazy aura was emanating from the 95th floor. Or more like from one specific place on the 95th floor—was it just one powerful monster? Another loner?

The 96th floor was nicely paved over now, except for the potholes of sticky poison all over the place. I couldn't afford to get into a fight because of the bad footing… and if I poked a hole in the wrong place, it could easily backfire. It made more sense to go up to the 95th floor and fight it head-on, so I did.

"Do you feel a boiling mad presence up there? Something so angry it's about to erupt?"

Skeleton Rep led the way upstairs again. She was really gung-ho about this. She hadn't had much chance to fight properly yet, plus there was nothing else to do. Also, I really needed to get her a cloak. *Seriously, doesn't she know that armor isn't supposed to show off your figure like that?*

Finally, the 95th floor. I used Appraisal.

"A level 100 Living Sword? What the hell?! Shouldn't it be level 95? Are we back at the bottom floor? Get your order right, goddamn it! *Ninety-five!* This is the *95th* floor, so *level* 95! Sheesh, swords nowadays…I say nowadays, but this thing looks dated as hell?"

A living sword, huh? It looked like it had flying capabilities, and it was bursting with energy, too. As in, bursting right at us! It stabbed into the ground and shot ten swords at us—seven slim silver swords, two black daggers, and one platinum longsword in the middle of the lot—they all blasted toward us at full speed.

All of the lively little swords were sprinkling some menacing presence of their own toward us, too. If I had my lively little mean girls to set loose on them, they'd see who the real menace was around here.

I sensed a menacing presence from Skeleton Rep as well. What should I do? Sprinkle her with a smile? In a dungeon? Maybe we could do some sort of combo attack, but we couldn't coordinate—she couldn't even talk! Did we have to stick to stabbing and beating? It looked like we were going to get stabbed first!

Then Miss Skeleton slowly, gracefully drew near. The sword floated into the air. Was she about to do that magic trick where she leaped onto a sword? She was a skeleton, so could she even technically get stabbed? The swords would just slip through her, right? It wouldn't make much difference even if you did pierce her bones.

At long, long last, a proper battle seemed set to begin. Emphasis on "seemed."

DAY 29?

I won't even get to do anything if the Platinum Knight shows up.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
95TH FLOOR

THAT LEVEL 100 LIVING SWORD was strong…by most people's standards. Wouldn't you say? Yeah, totally strong.

It danced through the air, sending its swords shooting at Skeleton Rep, who wove around them; this was an intense, elegant, rampage of sword attacks that covered the whole world. She blew all ten of those swords away with a single sword of her own. The eleven swords clashed in a storm of silver lines and a chorus of high-pitched clangs, a blinding flash of gold, and the swords danced in the middle of falling fireworks—a fantastic dance of blades.

My surroundings were deluged in the flurry of silver, in the unceasing, brilliant clash of steel…huh?

Clang—kerplunk!

"Whack?"

Skeleton Rep's final slash sent the one of the swords flying and clattering to a halt at my feet. I whacked it with my trusty "Wooden Staff?" and it stopped moving. Did it run out of batteries? Did it need a charge? I tried zapping it with lightning magic, but it still didn't move. It lay as still as a corpse. Well, a sword.

Clang—kerplunk!

"…Whack?"

Don't tell me this is gonna repeat over ten times?! Is she gonna keep knocking the swords over here for me to whack? So much work, I thought. Dungeons are supposed to be a life-or-death struggle. I could really go for something…er, what's the right way to put it…?

Clang—kerplunk!

"…Bonk?"

The pattern showed no signs of ending. Were we seriously going through this ten times?

Across from me was a platinum, skin-tight suit of armor dueling ten levitating swords in a whirlwind swords-dance showdown… While there I was, dressed in black from head to toe, wielding my little wooden sword and bonking away at swords that fell at my feet. Bonk. Bonk. Bonking away.

After defeating all ten of the swords, Skeleton Rep looked over at me expectantly. What did she want now? Was she some sort of beggar? A gold-digger?

"Uh, do you want them?"

Her helmet clanked as she nodded aggressively.
It was the swords she was after, huh. I lined them up for her and she took all of them…she didn't leave a single one for me! I had hoped to pick a good one and combine it with my "Wooden Staff ?" weapon. She seemed pleased, so I let it go—but did she really need ten swords?!
I suddenly remembered that I had an extra cloak inside my own cloak: the "Storage Cloak: Item Storage, Evasion, Magic Defense, Slash Endurance, Stab Endurance, Bludgeon Resistance." I handed it over to her and she happily accepted.
Were skeletons allowed to express this much emotion? Doesn't that kinda defeat the point of being a skeleton? Just a while ago, she was the dungeon emperor, y'know? She was cloaked in savage darkness, and all that. She seemed pleased, so I couldn't take too much issue… *Just another pleasant day for skeletons in the depths of dungeons, I guess.*
Skeleton Rep cheerfully put on the cloak and stored the swords inside. Then after some consideration, she put one of the slim swords in her belt.
One problem, though. There she was with platinum armor, a silver sword, and a crimson cloak. And next to her, I wore a black cloak and hood and held a wooden stick… That made *her* the boss! I was just a sidekick! Sidekick A! Who was the one who cast Servitude, again?!
Skeleton Rep was incredible, though. She fit the starring role perfectly. She was the one who sent ten swords dancing into the air in an explosion of silver stars, who conjured up a dazzling dance of whirling crystal flames and sparkling fireworks. And not only that, but her swords dance ended with her knocking the opponent's sword to land neatly at my feet. What amazing control!
I didn't have to take a single step. I just whacked, whapped, and bonked swords away with my stick. *Sigh.* Up to the 94th floor.
"My adventure starts now!" I declared. It was high time that I stuck a flag in the dungeon ground—a white flag. Yeah, my role here was over, as well as the show I was cast in. My final episode would close out with a big advertisement: "*Tune in next week for the adventures of the Platinum Knight!"*

DAY 29?

Anyone from my world would react like that! I assume they would, anyway!

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
95TH FLOOR

THANK GOODNESS, looks like my show had been renewed for a couple more episodes. *The Adventures of the Platinum Knight* had yet to air while we were walking forward. Still, I might not have much of a role to play from here on out. I may not have a role at all, if I was being honest. *Am I stuck being Black Cloak Man A after this?*

We went up to the 94th floor, with Skeleton Rep in the lead, as usual. Now that she had the cloak on, my eyes didn't land on concerning spots, although occasionally the cloak flapped upward and I caught a glimpse of her armored ass. Why did it keep catching my eye?! It must be some weird effect of the armor. Armor Fetish or something? *That sounds like a new light-novel genre,* I thought. *Please don't let that become a thing!*

This armor was way sexier than any armor should be. Armor didn't need to be so elastic and fit her form so tightly. She was all bones underneath! Why did she have so much…flesh, after she put the armor on? What use was there for elasticized armor in the first place?! There was even less point when worn by a fleshless skeleton! Yet another mystery of this fantasy world.

Let's start a little campfire, I thought, *and add a ton of wood and a bunch of paralysis mushrooms.* The fire started to smoke profusely. Then, with some wind magic, I blew the smoke up into the 94th floor.

The 94th floor had a bunch of assassin tarantulas, each of which were level 94. At least this floor got the level right. The name wasn't too pleasant: the only thing worse than a spider is a murderous killer spider. *Yeah, I gotta get out of here!*

My Presence Detection wasn't effective on them, so I couldn't figure out where they were. I just saw swarms of them in the shadows. They all had Instakill Toxin, too! I tried to smoke them out.

The assassin tarantulas flopped over on their backs and went into twitching fits in no time at all. Miss Armor Glare Rep went to finish them off with a stoic expression, while I kept the smoky fire going. I didn't have much choice; otherwise we'd get torn to shreds by the Instakill Toxin-wielding spiders.

As their nest burned, we advanced through the maze and saw a stairway. *The 93rd floor, huh? What time is it? What day is it?* I was nearing my limit and needed to take a nap soon. Did Skeleton Rep need to rest, too?

"Oh? Is there some space here? A wall? Huh?"

There was a little room hidden in the maze. Once I was finished grandly and gloriously burning up all of the spiders, I opened the door.
I leapt up in excitement. “A treasure chest! At last! Could this—could this be my sex appeal?”
Next to it…a level 94 genocide spider was convulsing. It was huge *and* in my way. Well, whatever.
“Treasure chest! Treasure chest! Finally, a treasure chest!”
Inside it lay neither my sex appeal nor a Pheromone Ring. *Was there no point in coming here in the first place?!*
The contents of the chest remained oblivious to my needs and feelings.
There was a “Magic Key LvMax: Opens any lock including or under LvMax.”
It opened literally any lock, huh? I guess there could be locks out there above LvMax, but then max wouldn’t be max! At any rate, this was a good find. Now I could open treasure chests.
I had a key to open anything…so wasn’t it about time I unlocked the world of adulthood? I didn’t even see the door to it around here. At this rate, I was never going to get inside, key or no key. *Is my virginity gonna stay locked up forever?*
I scrubbed away my tears and headed off to the 93rd floor. *Man, this is taking a while,* I thought. I decided to take a little peek upstairs, so I opened a hole in the ceiling.
Looked like a skeleton paladin, level 93. So…a horseback skeleton knight? Must’ve worked at the same company as Miss Skeleton Glare Rep. Did she know the guy?
“There are some skeleton paladins up on the next floor,” I said to her. “You okay with that? Any friends up there? Relatives? Wait, we’ve been wiping the floor with your subordinates, haven’t we?!”
Miss Skeleton Glare Rep cast a glare my way. I guess they weren’t friends or relatives. Was she a loner? Fair enough, then we could kill them without worrying. The problem was how to go about it.
Skeletons were typically affiliated with Dark Magic, but these guys were also Paladins, which were holy knights…that likely nixed their greatest weakness, which was to Holy Magic attacks. Monsters wouldn’t go down as easily after putting in all that work to nab a Holy classification.
Maybe we could put our differences aside after meeting in person, or something. I’d give them a shot.
Smack, clatter.
Oh, how unfortunate for them. Paladins had holy resistance, melee resistance, and a Revival skill to boot, but alas…they lacked crash resistance. When they fell from the 93rd floor down, their heads fell off, killing them instantly. All I had to do was send them through holes in the floor, though I had to do it one at a time, which was pretty boring.
Owwwwweeeeekyaaaaaaagrraaaaahh-ooooooowwwweeeesh!
I exterminated them all. I only had to wait a moment after their heads popped off, and then they disappeared and turned into spellstones.

The 93rd floor turned out to be a piece of cake. If only every floor were this easy! So why did I feel like Miss Glare Spellstone Collector had something to say about it? She couldn't talk, though, so problem solved.
We went up to the 93rd floor and investigated what was on the 92nd floor. Investigated, as in, we peeped through a hole in the floor.
It looked like something swimming up there. "Sky Shark, Lv: 92." *Sharks?!*
Sharks that swam through the sky? Literal as ever, I see!
I opened up more holes in the ceiling and stabbed them from below.
Uuuuuuaaaaaaaaraaaaaraaaaaa?!
I was wielding a "Wooden Staff?", not a harpoon, but it extended automatically to stave right through the sharks from below. They were mobile enough to dodge my attacks, so it took a long time. I charged my staff with lightning magic and continued to joust at them with all my might.
Tough luck. The sharks had no hope of making it out. Normally, a bunch of flying sharks would cause anyone to freak out; they'd give Jaws a run for its money! I stabbed at them, set loose lightning magic, turned my spear into a harpoon—or other times a rifle to shoot them down—zapped them with lightning, peppered them with bullets, mowed them down, the whole shebang. These sharks were products of a truly terrifying world. Though, I mean, people back in the real world would run away screaming from a regular shark. Probably. I'd never seen it happen in person.
"Did we get 'em?"
No response.
"Did we win?"
Still no response.
All right, we got 'em all. Time to go upstairs.
Miss Glare Armor Rep appeared to be sighing heavily. Wasn't she a skeleton? She shouldn't have lungs, right? She shouldn't be able to breathe, much less sigh. This was one kooky skeleton woman.
It didn't bother me. At least the creature that dwelled at the deepest pit of the dungeon was a little bit human. I imagined that it was rare to find a skeleton with this much vim, all the same.

DAY 29?

They can just scold the old dude into fixing them if there are any religious quibbles.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
92ND FLOOR

UP ON THE 92ND FLOOR, we collected the spellstones from the sharks and took a little break. I asked if Miss Glare Armor Rep needed a rest, but she seemed to be okay. She had barely broken out from her previous dark company, but she was *still* hustling. Was this some relic from her bitter days as dungeon CEO?

I munched on some roasted mushrooms, then lay down for a moment. We were only on the 92nd floor; we had a long way to go. If there's going to be a pitfall that brought me down here, the least the dungeon could do was give me a peakfall to shoot me back up! I tried to picture it, but couldn't conceive of what a peakfall would look like. Still, there were elevators, or lifts, or gondolas, or…literally *anything!* Names aside, they were all virtually the same thing.

I poked a hole in the ceiling as I lay on my back. I hate to state the obvious here, but as you would expect, this was yet another unfamiliar ceiling. Essential information. This was a dungeon, so I was cursed to face unfamiliar ceilings until I escaped.

I glanced through the hole. On the 91st floor, there appeared to be magic-resistant animated beings: "Anti-Magic Golem, Lv: 91." They seemed resistant against physical damage as well, but it was worth a shot. I sent one of them plummeting down through the floor.

Kaboink! Babang! Dading! Kerbonk!

The magic-proof, robust golem barely took any damage from falling one story. I gave it a little push, so it fell down another story, and then another, all the way to the bottom floor. *Yup, that worked.* I peeked over and saw that it had broken into little pieces, all thanks to that super-tall final story. What worried me at this point was that all the floors up to the 91st were so riddled with holes that the whole dungeon might cave in on itself. I had to traverse the maze to reach the next floor above, for one thing, and the real risk of the dungeon collapsing was another…but at least it seemed fine for now?

I tapped the ceiling with my stick to lure the golems toward the sound, and promptly sent them falling through a hole. They responded to the sound better than I thought. Since I couldn't see where they were, I expected bringing them closer to be tough, but it was actually easy-peasy!

Unfortunately, I had a more serious issue at hand: in this world, even someone without eyes could glare a hole in my head. I couldn't let my guard

down for a second. Incidentally, she looked fairly surprised right now. Impressive for a skeleton.
For about 30 minutes, Miss Glare Armor Rep opened up some more holes for me while I took a rest. I took a nap to the lullaby of multiple golems plunging into the depths of the dungeon and shattering upon its hard bottom.
I yawned and stretched. “I don’t sense any signs of life from upstairs anymore. Wanna head up?”
I found out that while I slept, Miss Glare Armor Rep created more holes in the ceiling with her stick and sent all of the anti-magic golems tumbling to the 100th floor. She then walked all the way downstairs, gathered the spellstones, and came back up. I honestly felt a little bad that she went to all that trouble, so I patted her head to thank her—it seemed to put her in a good mood, even though what I was patting was, essentially, a battle helm. I couldn’t imagine that anyone had ever pet her head down there at the bottom of the dungeon, so where was the harm? I did wonder whether she knew I intended it as a head pat. I just as easily could have been polishing her helmet.
I recovered some of my stamina, so we set off for the 91st floor. Normally, every ten floors, you would encounter some kind of boss…isn’t every 5 floors way too often?!
“I spy treasure chests!” I exclaimed. “I bet it’s my sex appeal! My sex appeal that was buried in the depths of a fantasy world dungeon!”
I zoomed toward the hidden room on the 91st floor. Area Analyze was incredibly useful!
Next to the treasure chest, I saw a giant boulder. What was a boulder doing there? I opened a hole in the ground and sent it rolling downstairs.
Seriously, a giant boulder for no reason? That surprised me more than the golems! If that wasn’t a trap but an intentional part of the dungeon’s architecture, I’d be in for a serious lecture from the dungeon’s interior designer! If you wanted to plant a boulder in the middle of the room, why not go for a full landscape garden? Oh, well. I dumped the boulder out of the room, so that was that.
I opened the treasure chest. “It’s a ring!” I gasped. “But…not the Pheromone Ring? Not exactly?” I used Appraisal: “Eternal Fortune Ring: Brings happiness, repels misfortune. LUK bonus (large).” Ooh, now that was right up my alley!
If misfortune resulted in scoldings, this was a seriously good omen. And if happiness resulted in shady stores, I was in double luck. Even though I already had luck above the limit, I fell into a pitfall, so maybe this ring would help me avoid similar occurrences. But I wasn’t the person who really needed this ring. I already had unlimited luck!
Considering all that luck, I’m pretty unlucky, I thought. There was someone else around who could really use a ring like this…
“Do you want it? I’ll give it to you, y’know, if you want…”

Miss Glare Armor Rep shook her head no. She was being polite, but I knew she needed this lucky ring more out of the two of us. She'd been caught up inside the evil darkness, held all alone in the depths of the dungeon for who knows how long, and hadn't lost her humanity in spite of it. She suffered through all that for a small eternity. *Though she* is *supposedly 17. That's freaky, so I won't press her about it.*

When we shoved the ring on her finger, it snapped to fit it. She was only bones, but it seemed to sit on her finger okay… Hopefully, it wouldn't fall.

Looking up to the 90th floor, it was clear there was only one monster residing there. A boss every five floors, then? A lone floor king…wait, alone? *A loner?!* Another companion! *Jeez, I warned you! Quit bringing up my loner status, goddamn it!*

It was a…ghost? A demon? A spirit? A boulder? Should I make this one fall, too? "Element Wraith, Lv: 100." *Another level 100? Are all the boss-floor-king loners level 100? And before you ask, no, they're not my friends.* I used Servitude on Miss Skeleton, but I still had my Loner title. Did monsters not count? Was it referring to how I could never make human friends? *Shut up, shut up! I'm not in the mood to deal with that!*

If that logic held, then this world didn't recognize the mean girls as humans! I guess you weren't supposed to use it on your friends like that, but still, it seemed kinda cruel.

The Element Wraith was like a bright shadow, a blurry apparition. Wraiths were technically ghosts, weren't they? *I thought* they counted as ghosts, anyway. This thing was kinda transparent, so it had to be a kind of spirit, right?

To explain my confusion, here: the monster names were English words, and I don't speak a lick of English, just Japanese—all this English that you're reading from me is translated. Deconstructing what each beast was based on its English name alone was no easy feat. "Eh-leh-men…t…?" Element, right? That could refer to the four elements, I guess, like fire and air? Or maybe it was more like the periodic table of elements, and referred to chemical and atomic composition? Heck, I'd heard of "Eucharistic elements" somewhere, so was this a theological matter?

Element comes from a Latin word that means "principle" or "rudiment," but that didn't help me. The nuance could go in any direction! What a useless name and description! If I assumed the simplest explanation it probably referred to a ghost with a four-elements typing, but that didn't help much, either.

I didn't spot any loaves of bread or goblets of wine; that ruled out it being a Eucharist Wraith. What a relief. How would I even handle it if the events of the Last Supper started unfolding in front of me?

The wraith started shooting attacks of fire and ice and wind magic at me. That was some solid confirmation that its name referred to the four elements, right there. Yes, "element" was literally written in the name, but

come on! That was so vague! Totally vague and obscure! It totally obscured me, at any rate.

Now what? Do I exorcise it?

I tried to remember the Japanese spell for exorcising ghosts: "*Rinbyoto shakaijin retsuzaizen!"* I cried.

Nothing happened. Did I get it wrong? Well, I figured it wouldn't work. I may as well try again though. I was pretty proud of myself for remembering. Maybe the issue was the *rinbyoto* and the *shakaijin* part of the spell. In Japanese, that first word meant getting sick, which sounded not ideal, and I definitely wasn't a *shakaijin*—an average office worker—since I was unemployed. Maybe you had to be a *shakaijin* to pull off the spell? How did I become a NEET in the first place? I was a regular high school student! Forget that—how did I become a loner when I was surrounded by other kids at school?! Actually, the *retsuzaizen* part of the incantation meant I was standing in front a pile of cash. Where was it?! The same words can have different meanings in Japanese…did the spell fail because I mixed up the meanings?

Yikes! That was close! The wraith charged at me, swooping through the air, without any warning! This Element Wraith wasn't interested in letting me figure out my role in this world.

When it swooped in, I leaped out of the way and doused it in a pile of salt. Like, a ton of salt.

"Uh…did it die?"

Miss Glare Armor Rep stood before the mountain of salt with her sword drawn, though she chose to stab me with a vicious glare instead.

"It was a ghost! Don't you get rid of ghosts with salt? To purify them, and stuff?"

Such scowl, very glare! I guess salt for ghosts is more of a Shinto thing. People from a Western-style fantasy world wouldn't get it. They also gave out the salt at Buddhist temples, though, so I guess some people in my world might get confused as well. In Buddhism, you exorcise ghosts with fire, but the Element Wraith had Four Element Magic Resistance which ruined that idea. In Christianity, salt and holy water works for ghosts, but again, there was the whole four elements thing, so… Salt seemed like the best option, out of all of them. People must be Buddhist here, judging by Miss Skeleton's reaction. *I'd bet good money that I couldn't purify it with fire, Miss Skeleton*, I thought. *It's got that pesky elemental resistance, after all.*

DAY 29?

I get the sense that somewhere, someone is hurting my feelings. Who would do such a thing?

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
50TH FLOOR

ON THE 50TH FLOOR, we encountered a level 50 Cyclops: a single, giant monster. It was a terrifying beast, mightier than we could ever imagine. Our 29-person defensive positioning was broken again and again. We swapped out the vanguard countless times to heal. And the rear guard devoured a countless stream of MP regeneration mushrooms as they weathered an onslaught of attacks. Finally, right on the verge of defeat, we toppled it. Everyone was exhausted, suffering from injuries, and ready to collapse. It was the platonic ideal of a pyrrhic victory; winning the battle had nearly destroyed us. Everyone was completely fatigued. That one cyclops was powerful enough to send us to the brink of complete annihilation.

So that was a dungeon boss. These were the true guardians of the dungeon, and the first one we had faced was on the 50th floor.

Oda-kun couldn't estimate how often we'd face them. Once every ten floors from now on, once every 25, or maybe there was just one more boss at the 100th floor? There might even be one every five floors from here on out. Each new floor we tackled held the most powerful enemies we had ever faced up until that point.

If Kakizaki-kun and the other athletes hadn't been in the vanguard, we wouldn't have been able to hold our formation. Those five had close-range combat stats on another level—they were practically monsters. Though they had only joined our group recently, they cooperated flawlessly without even having to check their surroundings. I remember Haruka-kun saying that they were perfectly optimized for this world. "They were top athletes in Japan, but that's just a peaceful society's substitute for warrior tribes." Even with his advance warning, it was stunning to see their overwhelming prowess on display with my own eyes.

Then there was Shimazaki-san and her friends, who wielded devastating offensive attacks. They'd already surpassed Oda-kun and his friends; each of them was above level 80. Since they had managed to apologize and express their gratitude to the nerds, and reunite with Haruka-kun, they'd improved in terms of emotional stability as well. They avoided unnecessary injuries and exhaustion. Before, they were too concerned about external matters, but now they were completely focused on their tasks. They used their magic to attack aggressively, defend precisely, and overall maintained an ideal balance in the battle. And their levels were going up even now—I assumed it was due to continuing to receive experience from Haruka-kun. From that,

I could tell that Haruka-kun was fighting monsters way, way stronger than the ones we were engaging. As usual.
Meanwhile, Oda-kun and his friends backed them up in perfect sync. They used high-level skills and maintained a precise evaluation of the battle circumstances. *It really did take a fantasy world to get them to take something seriously*.
The original group of twenty girls had increased by nine, but our power had gone up exponentially. We had a much stronger front and mid-guard, with more destructive and defensive power alike. Now, large groups formed from the rest of the class could strike in guerilla raids, attacking suddenly and withdrawing, taking charge to change the flow of a battle.
If we could gather our whole class together, I knew we'd be even stronger. But we were down thirteen students. Still, we had never been this strong before.
None of this brought me any closer to understanding Haruka-kun's strength. How was he even real? He was only level 12. His abilities prevented him from leveling up. He got the "Sorcerer" title at some point, but remained technically unemployed. He had the skills of an assassin or a spy, but used melee weapons—so his battle strategy was to attack from close range and then dodge. He learned how to use eight types of magic, but his main combat skill was Cane Mastery…and he learned how to walk through the sky, too. He seemed really pleased about that last one. But *why?!* And where was he headed?! He seemed weak when you glanced at his stats, but when you watched him fight, you could never imagine winning against him.
He defeated a level 50 goblin emperor, by himself. All twenty-nine of us barely managed to take one out at level 50, as a group! It was the strongest species of goblin by far, one that had attained incredible levels of power after a ton of ranking up. He beat that *alone*.
He probably had faced a level 100 monster down on the bottom floor of the dungeon, and if you ask me, he had survived it.
Maybe there was nothing to worry about. But maybe there was! There was no way a normal guy would be okay right now, having faced a level 100 monster! If things were normal, he would be stuck in a completely hopeless situation after falling into that pit and everything. Then again, the guy who did fall into that pit was the furthest thing from normal there was. He lacked all the strengths and weaknesses of a normal person.
But I can't help it. I'm so worried about him.
"I'm sure he'll be fine," I said out loud. "Just like before. He didn't even set out to die on purpose like last time; this one was just an accident."
"Agh, that damn Haruka-kun! Why is he always doing this junk without telling us!"
"Well, it'd be even worse if he did and we gave him permission anyways."
"I bet he *would* convince us to let him, somehow!"

He just fell down, I thought, *that's all.* There was the whole Pheromone Ring issue…but I could confiscate that from him once he found it! No one—not even Haruka-kun—would put his life on the line for a Pheromone Ring. Even when he was with us, he would make some stupid blunder, we'd all lecture him about it, and then he'd just move on without understanding. If I took my eye off him for a second, it was anyone's guess what he'd do next. And it had to be a guess, because he was thoroughly impossible to predict. *There's no way we can leave him to do whatever he pleases!*

We took a break once total exhaustion overwhelmed us. Oda-kun and his friends had regeneration abilities, so they went out on reconnaissance. They reported back that the dungeon was dying. Yeah, you read that right: *dying*. The monsters on the floors above us weren't respawning. Apparently, the monsters would stop regenerating after the main boss was defeated. This meant we didn't need to worry about getting back. We could go as far as we need to in order to find Haruka-kun without further worry.

"Everyone else looks, like, pretty tired, so I'll go look for him!" said Vice Rep B.

"No, you need to wait for the others to form a party," I said.

"Yo, there are five of us here! We'll just look around and see what's ahead!" shouted Kakizaki-kun.

"You guys are completely out of MP," I said. "You need to rest!"

"Three of us have MP left!"

"You need to form a *party*!" I repeated. "That means *five*, not three!"

Everyone was anxious to forge ahead, to try to find Haruka-kun, but we had to get stronger to have any chance of catching up with him. Even then, we would never be on his level. We might have been impatient, yes, we were certainly all out of patience—for Haruka-kun. Our main goal was to help him, for sure, but I suspect we mostly wanted to yell at him, too. The guy would trample and destroy everything in his path in the most absurd way possible, yet even on the verge of death he could accomplish the impossible. We were desperate to get back to Haruka-kun.

DAY 30?

Building a public bath on the 100th floor means risking your life just to get there, only to be freezing by the time you get back upstairs.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
90TH FLOOR

WE PICKED UP THE SPELLSTONES and a fancy Element Necklace that the wraith left behind. “Element Necklace: Magic bonus (large), magic defense up (large), MP Absorption up (large).” The necklaces were speckled all over with the salt I had tossed at the wraiths, but that might just give them an extra dash of magical protection. It seemed like the necklaces might help with Magic Infusion, so I really wanted them. Unfortunately, they were flashier than a disco full of superheroes! They’d be weird on a teenage boy, sure, but they’d look just as weird on anyone who wasn’t a celebrity! Women might wear gorgeous necklaces like that to a fancy party, I guess. These necklaces were crammed with a variety of dangling gemstones, with one large stone as a statement piece in the middle…a diamond? *Yeah, waaaay too flashy for me!* I’d never even been *invited* to a party before! I’d have to use these as an offering to a god, or something.

I tried giving them to Miss Armor Rep. She continued to glare at me. She declined at first, but after I insisted, she happily took a necklace and put it on. Looking happy was no mean feat for her, given that she only had sockets for eyes, but she pulled it off! That was good enough for me. She used to be a lich, so maybe she could still use magic… The necklace boosted magic both defensively and offensively, plus more magic resistance never hurt. I was the one who used Servitude on her, so I considered it my responsibility to make sure she was safe.

Though, wasn’t I offering her a little *too* much? I had to keep her in good equipment, that was true, but now she had platinum armor, a crimson cloak, and now jewelry, as well? She was like a glittery, glitzy Miss Offering at this stage. Hey, wasn’t I the one who thought of that stuff as offerings? What am I, her believer?! Worshipping a skeleton, huh… That made for a pretty satanic religion, but I didn’t care. God was just a useless old dude that who himself up, anyways! Even if he did get another chance to lecture me at length, I was never going to pray to that god! Not ever!

“We’re finally in the 80s,” I said. “Only 89, I guess, so it’s still a long way.” When I poked my perfunctory hole in the ceiling, I saw a monkey peeping down at us. *Whoop, screech!*

I used Appraisal. “Hanuman Lv: 89.” *That’s the monkey god… I think it’s from India?* I couldn’t remember. Somewhere in Asia. Shouldn’t it be wearing a more Eastern get-up?

I expected these guys to pack some speed, being monkeys and all. At last, we'd encountered enemies that wouldn't die when they fell through the hole in the ground. As level 89 monkey gods, they were sure to have some smarts as well. Plus there was a big group of them. A mass battle. *This is shaping up to be an impossible match-up*, I thought, before tossing up some paralysis mushrooms. The monkeys shrieked loudly and scrambled for the mushrooms, devoured them, and one by one froze up and toppled over. *I guess they're just monkeys after all?*

"I would've had no chance actually fighting them," I sighed. "Does this *really* count as a dungeon battle, though? Feels more like pest control."

Grumbling to myself, still feeling the keen glare of Miss Armor Rep on the back of my head, I rushed upstairs to stab the Hanuman monsters. Their stats informed me that they were incredibly fast, sly and crafty, too. *Whatever. Their fault for getting into a fight over the mushrooms.* I'd barely been able to follow their movement with my eyes. From Appraisal, I saw they had Herculean Strength, Swift Body, Pack Tactics, and Magic Reflection. Fighting them would've been near impossible. But when you looked at it objectively, I'd fed them poison, then paralyzed them, and then stabbed them to death while they were frozen…wasn't I becoming the bad guy here? If my appeal dropped any further I'd be in real trouble.

I pulled myself together and headed for the 88th floor. Level 88 monsters. It sounded like an appropriate number for a bunch of fighter jet monsters or something. *That sounds horrible! Speed-of-sound travel is banned here*, I thought, and used Appraisal: "Fire Unicorn, Lv: 88." *Horses?* What relation did horses have with the 88th floor? Horses might prove a real pain to fight if they had bad tempers.

Then they all just kinda fell from their high horses through the hole in the ground.

"They should've been Pegasi instead," I said, sighing. "A unicorn is just the maidenly version of a horse, and everyone and their mother knows that a horse's weak point is its legs! If you cut its legs it's out—as in, like dead? It's practically begging to get killed, as monsters go. Whatever, I got 'em all the same… They were all clustered together, too, as if asking me not to send them falling, but that practically begged me to do it, like out of reverse psychology. So of course I went through with it!"

Why wasn't Miss Glare Armor Rep more moved by the situation? Her expression had been left on the "glare" setting for ages. At least she helped me to finish off the unicorns.

"A treasure chest!" I exclaimed after using Area Analyze. "And a bunch of them, too! I guess no one has ever made it here before—they've never been touched, I bet." I opened the first one. "Huh? This isn't my sex appeal!"

It was some sort of leather glove. Was I stylish enough to wear this? I had better be. Miss Glare Armor Rep didn't seem interested.

“It says ‘Spearshield Gauntlets: (Left) Nullifies physical and magic attacks. (Right) Nullifies physical and magic defense.’ There’s some metal attached, so I guess they’re gauntlets…even though they’re almost entirely leather.”
So the right one was the spear, and the left was the shield…or so it seemed. I was ambidextrous, so it was a moot point, but poor lefties! Being left-handed would render the whole item worthless. I stored them inside my “Leather Gloves?”.
Metal accents appeared on the fingertips. They looked a little more gauntlet-esque now, yeah.
My whole outfit, which gave off extreme Villager A vibes from the outset, barely changed at all. It didn’t matter how many cool items I compounded them with.
“I guess my leather gloves changed a bit… It’s subtle, y’know, but ever since I slotted my Speed-Bonus Boots my boots got tighter. I guess if you slot tons of interesting items into them, they might eventually become stylish? Great, from now on, I just need to avoid any weird old-lady items!”
Unless giving my left-hand “Nullifies Physical-Magic” meant that…? *That would really suck!* Did it get rid of *all* magic?! If it disillusioned all the illusions on my hand I would feel pretty disillusioned about it!
This dungeon was like that game Amazing Breaker that I used to play all the time. It was one thing to shoot nuns out of the sky, but horses? I could kiss my chances of being a main character goodbye once I left all these horses to perish. I technically was the one who brought them crashing down in the first place, so sue me!
“Goodbye, horsies! Now on to the 87th floor? I think?”
Miss Armor Rep nodded.
I opened up the teeniest, tiniest blot of a hole, and took the sneakiest of a peep through. Alas…no feminine, sexy monsters. Did those exist in this world? I was starting to doubt it. *This is no fun*, I thought. I took all those pains to sneak a peep from a low angle, and what did I get for my trouble? Horses! All I spied was…well, the heavy dangling as they walked around. *Only the most messed up people would go around trying to see that on purpose.*
The next floor wasn’t any fun either. “Lightning Bee, Lv: 87.” Could you knock off the buzzing? How’s a guy supposed to sleep with that racket! They were way louder than regular bees. It was like loudness itself, turned up to the max volume on venue speakers!
I started to smoke them out.
Every once in a while, a bee burst through the smoke with amazing force—so I whacked and crushed each one with my stick as they emerged. *How fast are these bees?!* This was gonna give me hives. It was like trying to hit professional fastballs at a batting cage. So explain to me, how come Glare Armor Girl, who didn’t have any eyes, cleanly sliced each bee apart, no issue? By contrast, I swung my stick around wildly like a complete idiot.

Sensing out their presence made it a bit easier, but c'mon! Give a guy a break!
We crushed bees for a while, but more than half of them were left. Was anyone tracking our kill count? At least 400, possibly 500, or even more? And we still had *half* left to kill*?* We'd need to work overtime just to gather up all the spellstones, here! *This is a labor code violation!* This dungeon had no respect for worker's rights! I may be a NEET, but how much backbreaking labor would it take for me to get home?
"I'll be a billionaire once we exchange all of these. This'll cause a sudden price drop for sure. Maybe then I can finally stay at home and do my NEET title proud. Or I could just build a house here, I guess…"
Nah, renovations usually started from the first floor, and building a public bath on the 100th floor would mean risking your life just to get there, only to be freezing by the time you got back upstairs—no one would want to come in the first place. You could drop down through the pitfall to speed things up, but I didn't see many folks surviving the fall, let alone taking a bath after its. I guess people might be tempted if the hot springs there had bruise-healing benefits, though. I could use the nerds as guinea pigs: drop them down the pitfall, and make sure they landed on the hard rocks!

I couldn't stop thinking about how easily I would've been able to go back if there had been a cliff rather than a pitfall. Should I make a cliff, use it to climb to the top, and then shove the nerds off the edge? It was a good idea in theory, but if I had that kind of magic power I wouldn't still be here in the first place. At level 12, I'd have no chance! I guessed I'd leveled up since coming to the cave, but building an entire cliff? No, that was impossible. If I wanted to skewer the nerds I'd just use a pitfall instead. Great, glad we had this talk.

DAY 30?

I’m rolling with all my might, but I hate the idea that people think I’m just rolling around.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
87TH FLOOR

“STILL ON THE 87TH FLOOR…this dungeon is way too long!” I grumbled.

I was so bored. Couldn’t they change things up or something? The dungeon was nothing but stone room after stone room, with no way to discern how much time had passed. Was this an adventure in a fantasy world’s dungeon, or a routine pest extermination? *Boooring.*

Never getting a proper fight with any of the monsters may have contributed to my boredom, but it’s not like I had any chance of beating them in a normal fight. The weakest ones so far, the bees, were still super-fast and stung hard!

We were done crushing the vast majority of the bees. I didn’t need all of the spellstones they left behind, but it’d be a waste to not at least pick them up. My item bag

was crammed to the brim with spellstones…although, despite fighting this many monsters, the volume of spellstones couldn’t compare to the number of mushrooms.

More importantly, did I have a Poverty stat or something as a hidden attribute? Miss Armor Glare was rushing to pick up spellstones with all her might, but I didn’t feel the slightest urge to copy her. Why bother getting rich off spellstones in a place without bookstores?

One thing was certain, though: I *definitely* didn’t need to worry about money anymore. The risk of getting my money confiscated into savings by Class Rep had gone up substantially, however. Here I was, tottering on the cusp of death, but it was nice not to feel stressed about my retirement savings.

I noticed another hidden room on the current floor. “Wow, it’s huge. Is that a giant treasure chest? And it’s making a buzzing sound!”

It was going all buzz-buzz, buzz-buzz, so of course I had to go check it out. *Holy shit.* It was a massive queen bee! Like, a real queen bee! Why didn’t it come out before?! Apparently, the smoke didn’t work on it at all. *It must be too big to feel the effect!* Yeah, even thinking back to the regular bees, some zipped out right away and others perished. *Maybe they have a smoke resistance ability that varies by bee?*

A regular Lightning Bee was about the size of a duffel bag, charged with electricity and sure to zap right at you at a ridiculous speed. Those guys were big for bees to begin with, bro! The level 87 Lightning Queen Bee, in

comparison, was about the big of an 18-wheeler! No wonder the room was so huge!
The enormous queen bee charged at me without further fanfare. I leapt sideways out of the way, and it already had its stinger out prepared to strike me—holy god, that stinger was bigger than my arm, maybe bigger than my leg! That thing didn't need *lightning* on top of all that! All it needed to do was plow me over. I'd die long before it had any chance to sting me.
Miss Glare Armor Rep had to dodge the attack for herself; she easily evaded via an elegant flip, and slashed back at the bee with a flash of her sword while she was still in the air. I, on the other hand, was rolling on my backside just to survive!
Assuming it'd be suspicious to roll around without taking any other actions, I tried summoning massive globes of water and firing them at the bee.
"So because it's a bee, it really does hate water… Or perhaps it just hates getting wet? A queen that hates getting wet… Yikes, that practically sounds…sexy?! Knock it off, this is a bee we're talking about here!"
Drenched in water, the queen bee collapsed to the ground, its massive, tusk-like pincers rattling. Miss Armor Rep wasted no time in stabbing it to death. It didn't seem able to fly anymore; had it short-circuited?
Miss Armor Rep cut off its giant head in one stroke. Meanwhile, I continued rolling around. I guess I was slacking off.
I stood up at last. "Man. No point trying to fight something with speed like that, so long range was definitely the way to go… Though thinking on, Lightning Bees don't have any magic resistance, do they? I could've used a magic attack all along."
Whoops. I had gotten too used to whacking things with my stick. Still, I was hardly a close-range specialist or anything. I was unemployed! No job! I could do whatever I want! Within certain stringent limits, so…I couldn't do much of anything, really.
That ridiculous combo from Miss Armor Rep, though! She'd dodged in a single step, and then shifted into an aerial attack. By the time she finished her first step, she was already into her attacking motion in one seamless move. It was similar to my specialty attack, Life or Death.
Well, my personal one-step-one-blow attack was on a different level, yes, but this was still an attack that combined evasion and attacking into a single move. The essence of Life or Death was to reduce all unnecessary movements into a maximum-speed, single blow. *And why am I still rolling around?* I thought, bouncing off the hard rock floor. *I better stand up, my back's starting to hurt!*
I stood up and stretched. "Whew! Treasure chest time! This room is massive and all we get is a regular-sized treasure chest? After those giant enemies, it seems like an insult! It seems even smaller now that I've said that…"
After all that rolling around I did for sheer survival's sake…I was freaking amazing for dodging that! That was how I felt until I saw her ridiculous flip-

slash, anyway! Yeah, my confidence got scored in two by that flip-slash as well! I was ready to fall over and start rolling on the ground all over again thanks to her sweet moves! Technically I was rolling already, but still!
I had the “Spearshield Gauntlets: (Left) Nullifies physical and magic attacks” on my left hand, so it was little wonder that I could stop the bee’s attack so easily. That queen bee was a certified horror show all the same! A truck-sized bee, charging at you, with her unbelievably fat stinger at the ready… My gauntlet nullified the physical force of the attack, but it was still strong enough to send me flying! *Yeah, that’s right…I would’ve been rolling around either way.*
Maybe I should come up with a roll-around-slash attack to complement with Miss Skeleton Rep’s flip-slash attack? Not that I’d ever want to use that skill. Rolling around on the ground and chucking occasional attacks out at the enemy would look like peak laziness! *I can’t do it*, I thought, *that would cause irreparable damage to my already-ruined sex appeal.*
Pouting to myself, I opened the treasure chest. It didn’t even require the “Magic Key: LvMax.” All that work, only to attain the most generic secret-treasure-chest item a dungeon could think of—well, *thank god* I could use it on all the other floors I already passed! Sheesh! What’s the point of getting an item if you can no longer use after you pick it up?!
Inside the treasure chest: “Blessed Bangle: Sublimates curses and disaster (limited to one-time use).” Ooh, could these trinkets sublimate the curse of my lectures and scoldings? *Please, Blessed Bangle, douse the fire of my false accusations!*
Then I remembered that Miss Skeleton had the “Platinum Armor: Cursed. Absorbs the wearer’s flesh and blood.” She was a skeleton with a severe lack of flesh or blood, so it didn’t seem to be causing any problems…but it was definitely cursed.
And what about the darkness of the bottom floor of the dungeon? That heavy, deep, pitch-black darkness. Envy? Despair? Misery? Suffering? Well, hopefully not all of those things, but she may still be cursed by the darkness lurking down there. The darkness had evaporated after she left, and now she was a lively skeleton…that was enough of a happy ending, right? Enjoying yourself as a jolly little bag of bones?
But, see, I had no way to confirm that the darkness had vanished altogether. The Blessed Bangle was single-use gear anyways, so I may as well try it…
“Here you go. You should have the Blessed Bangle. I mean, probably, you should… You’ve had a rough enough time up until now, I think. Also, your armor is cursed…and stuff? Unfortunately, I can pretty much guarantee it won’t have the power to douse my personal fire, even if I did wear it. The personal fire of my false accusations, you know? It’s all very tragic.”
She kept staring at me, despite her lack of any eyes. Then she reached out both hands in reverence, slowly took the bangles, and put them on her wrists, pressed them against her heart, and lowered her head. She looked

like…a knight. Yes, even though she was a dullahan before. If she liked those bangles, then that was fine with me; as another set of fancy, glittering pieces of jewelry, they suited her better than a high school boy like me. "Blessed" items were usually related to god, anyway, and thus gave me a case of the heebie-jeebies. That old dude would never do anything decent for me, and especially not if it involved titles!

"All right! Time to get on up to the 87th floor! Wait, we're on the 87th floor. The 86th floor, then. Yeah, that's next. We've only gone up 14 floors? Seriously, FML."

I was ready to give up and go home! Too bad going home involved getting through this maze. Normally, you could use a gate in dungeons like this that'd let you travel between floors you already visited, but I had no idea how to use something like that. This was my first dungeon, after all.

Speaking of the dungeon, it was definitely in its death throes; you could tell from the atmosphere. I didn't expect it'd spawn any more monsters…but that left a lot of monsters to get rid of, nonetheless. We had so much dungeon left, and I was bored stiff. Serious dungeon-raiders had to be committed and unflagging, trekking from floor to floor to floor to floor. Why did people like that decide to become adventurers? Fantasy-world folks, man. Truly inexplicable.

I pulled myself together and took a peep up to the next floor, an angle that would serve as the perfect lure for a high school boy. I saw black stripes on a yellow furry coat. Is that you, Hobbes? No…it looked like Hobbes, but it was an actual tiger! I used Appraisal.

"Mirage Tiger, Lv: 86." Ah, so this tiger was a magic trick! That's what a mirage is, right? I had to take it down while getting bewitched, was that the gimmick? A level 86 tiger…and there seemed to be about 30 of them in total. Oh yeah, and they were *huge*! Tigers were supposed to be the strongest of all mammals, and I was supposed to fight tigers that had magic at their disposal*?* Why couldn't they be ordinary kitty cats?! *Please? I could use a pet.*

There was no point in fighting them, so instead, I made a bunch of large boxes with my Earth Magic on the 86th floor. Then I took a rest. Time to eat! Fish would do nicely for me.

I chowed down on fried fish and scouted the 86th floor…there were all the kitty cats. Good thing I made sure the boxes were smaller than the tigers' bodies. Just like cats, they hopped right into them. I knew they were fierce kitty cats at heart! I closed up the boxes, trapping each of the tigers inside. Time to go upstairs.

DAY 30?

I don't know what the hell that is, but I don't want anything to do with extendable ears.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
87TH FLOOR

***I** BETTER HURRY BEFORE they break out of the boxes!* I thought, rushing upstairs. I specifically made the boxes dense and sturdy, but the Mirage Tigers had a power stat of over 800 and Herculean Strength, too. It'd be all over for me if they staged a prison break, especially since they had 800+ speed—I had no chance of escaping from tigers! I rushed for the stairway, and a glance behind me revealed that Miss Armor Glare was stabbing the tigers through the boxes! *Don't let them out!* I prayed. *Don't you dare!*
Since I couldn't see inside the cages, it was a good thing I didn't have to see the gore with my own eyes. The kitty cats were snuggly packed in those boxes. At least their wails weren't cute in any way. It was more like a "Gurrrraaaaaawwwr grrroooaaa!" which didn't bother me. I decided to start stabbing them, too. They weren't kitty cats, after all. *They aren't cute.*
Only one broke out of its cell and chased us around the floor. It was scary enough to get chased around by a tiger, but this one could conjure up mirages, too! Miss Glare Armor Rep killed it with her patented, magnificent flourish, while I rolled around trying to escape. I was trying my best! I swear! They were dodges of the most peerless variety! See, I fell over…and kept on rolling.
Then I had to break apart the boxes to get the spellstones. Fortunately, the other tigers couldn't escape before we killed them. Guess they should have tried being Illusion Tigers rather than Mirage Tigers…maybe then they'd manage a breakout.
Next up was the 85th floor, so…a boss would probably show up. I couldn't care less, really; just following Miss Glare Armor Rep would be enough to get me through this, although if I kept following her around and letting her do everything, I'd end up with some whack title like "Sugar Baby." I did *not* need another bad title! Three was painful enough! *Every time I look at my status, it's salt in the wound.* Your status shouldn't be able to insult you! I bet I was the only guy here who took a hit to his self-confidence whenever he checked his status.
There were 100 floors after all, and more than 100 varieties of monsters, so it was still worth doing a peep check. There was still the slightest chance that this low angle would reveal exactly what any red-blooded high-school boy dreams of finding…a corpse?!
Whuh-oh, worst-case scenario! The worst low-angle peep in history! I peeped up at a rotting corpse from a low-angle! Appraisal revealed two

ghouls, one level 58 and the other level 61…wait, and another level 38 ghoul too. There were tons of them. Did this meant that the 85th floor didn't have a boss?
"Is this one of those things where if we defeat enough zombies I turn into a spirit channeler?! I'm serious, that's what's up, right?"
I went up to the 85th floor, gathered up a ton of fireballs, used Packing Magic on them, and lined them up into a giant barrier of flame. Maybe you could call it a firewall…geddit? I built up the firewall, and moved it forward in front of me as I advanced. It used a ton of MP, but I had tons of tons of MP regeneration mushrooms, so I wasn't concerned, especially since I had soy sauce to zhuzh them up with!
"Aha, so there was a level 100 Necromancer controlling them. Did I get him?"
I burned up all the zombies, but couldn't tell which figure was the Necromancer. I had a giant wall of flames in front of me the whole time, so it was tough to see… Anyway, I set everybody in the floor alight, meaning he was dead now as well, but he was definitely there before. I found a Necromancer jewel in the aftermath—that was conclusive proof it existed! Unless it was from a zombie king, instead. I sure as hell hoped it wasn't that, but either way, nothing was left alive on the floor, so…problem solved.
For some reason, Miss Skeleton Rep had been glaring at me in shock this whole time, and now it was official—she could put up a serious fight with Class Rep with a glare like that! Thank goodness that glare fights aren't actually a thing.
"Necromancer Jewel: Governs life and death. Instant-Kill, Instant-Kill Resistance." It was a ruby, then? It looked expensive. I guess it could be red beryl or spinel…those might make more sense. I couldn't tell them apart anyways! What would a high school boy know about gemstones?! *All I see is a jewel!*
You could probably use a gem of this size in a necklace. If you made it an earring it would make your ear droop, and then you'd have uneven ears!
"You can have it," I said, holding it out.
It was a major question as to whether Instant-Kill resistance would be of any use to a skeleton, but right now it was between me and Miss Skeleton Rep. I wouldn't be caught dead wearing that giant jewel.
I did need Instant-Kill resistance on the one hand, but even all of the Instant-Kill attacks from whatever-his-name-was didn't work on me. General Health must be keeping me in good shape. My skills made no sense, but they seemed to be working! I also had unlimited luck, so I wouldn't die unless something had a 100 percent chance of killing me…or so it seemed. I didn't want to test it out, but at the same time, I didn't want that giant gem either. Just one droopy ear? Remote tribes removed from modern society wouldn't even go that far. *I'll pass.*
Miss Skeleton Rep stared at me for a long time, as if lost in thought; she didn't seem to be glaring. Eventually, she gave a slight bow, and accepted

it. *She must be super into jewels and accessories,* I thought. As I said earlier, it was big enough to pair nicely with the Element Necklace she was wearing. *She seems pleased with it?* Miss Skeleton was mad strong, but she seemed to have a few gold-digger tendencies to go with it. At this rate she'd strip me of everything I had, and I'd be the skeleton! Oh, well, so long as she was happy. She spent so long suffering in the eternal darkness after all. She deserved a treat.

Okay, now we'd ascend to…the 84th floor, was it? I was always looking up at one floor from another, so I kept getting them mixed up. Those things above us were level 84, so *that* was the 84th floor. *Jeez, I'm still way outta my depth!* Level 40 wouldn't be much of a problem. That was a mere 40 floors away. Just 40 more low-angle peeps.

"It says the monsters up there are level 84 gryphons. What tactics should we go with? They won't fall down through the holes. They fly, y'know? Perhaps using smoke again would work…are they mushroom fans? I'm guessing they won't just hop into boxes. Maybe something that looks like a nest…"

Gryphons had the upper half of an eagle and the lower half of a winged lion. The creature with a snake's tail was…some other thing, right? Gryphons combined the king of the birds with the king of the beasts, making it the ultimate symbol of kings. I think it was based on an eagle-lion, but I didn't have an encyclopedia of mythical beasts to hand. How was I meant to know the specifics? Anyway, this king had the head of a bird? Could kings get away with being bird headed? That symbolism didn't make any sense!

Was a gryphon a bird, or a lion? I heard that birds hate strong magnets, so if it was a bird I'd try that…if I had any strong magnets, which I did not. If it was a lion, I could use the box strategy from before. These guys had bird heads, though…meaning they were fundamentally birds. I think.

I sprinkled paralysis mushrooms in with fish and laid them out on the 84th floor. They were super popular! Fish was the answer all along! Fish would lead me to victory! Riding on those rave reviews, the gryphons scrambled to peck at the fish with their beaks, one at a time, picking up a fish and then flying away…before seizing up and dropping to the ground.

I'd have to take care to not do the same thing. You'd think I'd get along nicely with folks who liked fish as much as I do, but I still beat them to death in the end.

I continued up to the 84th floor and crossed through the maze, whacking the gryphons as I went. I grumbled to myself the whole time.

"Monsters falling to death in the middle of renovations, that's going to put me up against work-related injury lawsuits, isn't it? Though, they weren't my employees…and I'm a NEET. So I should be fine. Still, if this isn't a work-related injury, what is?"

Miss Glare Armor Rep watched me with an unusual expression. The dungeon emperor might get mad at me if she found out that something bad happened to her employees, so I vowed to keep it a secret.

After all the great renovations I made, why was there a hole in the wall? Was I supposed to know that construction was prohibited here? Sheesh, the least they could've done was put up a sign! The one most responsible here was a little too scary for me to approach, so I'd hold my tongue for now, but still—I wasn't happy!

DAY 31

They're dogs! Just hurl garlic and cayenne pepper at 'em! That's what I wanted to say, but I knew I'd be stuck apologizing for days on end afterword.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
54TH FLOOR

THEY WERE TOO STRONG. "Werewolf, Lv: 54." Men transformed into wolves were cool in movies, but having to fight them was a bit much… Couldn't this dungeon give us a break?

"Stay with your parties! Don't let them separate you!" I cried.

They were nothing more than bipedal, hairy wolves, with faces like kobolds in variant colors. They were powerful, though, and fast; worst of all, they were overwhelmingly strong.

"We're trying, but they've got us surrounded!"

"We can back you up!"

"No, you can't leave your position!"

"We can't slow them down, we need to get them in position first!"

These beasts had animal agility and instincts, and the pack was about sixty strong. This was hardly a case of us coordinating to hunt down wolves: this was them one-sidedly exhibiting their strength against us.

It was terrifying. This situation was exactly why we needed to adopt Haruka-kun's style of fighting, but that came with blood-curdling risks of its own.

With the werewolves' swift counterattacks and seamless coordination, it was impossible for us to keep up. When we did manage to recklessly drive them into a corner, they would dodge every attack we had with their peerless speed, leaving us unable to finish them off.

"Girls, don't try to lure them in! If you make a single mistake, they'll get you from behind!" hollered Oda-kun.

"We know that!" cried Shimazaki-san. "You guys need to stay back too. You're exposing yourselves!"

The hunters had complete control of the game, striking first, second, and third. We had no gap to close in on them; we couldn't create even the tiniest opening. Trying to rush them lured us into war of attrition, and when we tried to wait them out they would pull a blitzkrieg. It was a battle of nerves, more than anything, and the wolves were toying with ours, disrupting our coordination so we were unable to fight back.

We desperately preserved our cramped battle formation while hanging on by a thread. The werewolves were too strong for any of us to break off for a one-on-one round against them.

"None of our magic is working on them! Not even Mental Manipulation!"

Our magic bounced hopelessly off of the wolves, as they sent our wide-range blasts of light bounding back with a bristle. They interrupted our defenses with their speed, dodged all of our attacks, and drove us to the brink with brute force; and we were growing more tired the whole time. We couldn't hold out for much longer.
"U-formation! We'll draw them in, so stay in formation! Both flanks, prepare yourselves!"
We formed a semi-circle and drew the werewolves into our ranks, but the werewolves realized what we were doing and refused to come all the way to the center. They would occasionally send in a single werewolf as a decoy for a chance to attack either our left or right flank.
We were on the left side, and Kakizaki-kun and his friends were on the right. The center and rearguard rested to restore stamina and MP.
Meanwhile, each party that took the left and right flank got crushed one after another. We only had to find a way to kill one of them! If we could hurt them enough, we could make them retreat. We could charge in to finish them off if they granted us the tiniest opening. But they didn't. They kept throwing us off balance and crushing us bit by bit.
Things were only just getting warmed up. If the werewolves launched a full-out attack on either the left or right flank, we could try to stop them there. If we couldn't, then we'd be the ones at a loss. Still, it currently looked like they would completely overcome our formation and leave us dead.
Then they attacked. Seven to the right, eight to the left. The rest ran around to distract us; it was a diversion to lure us out of our formation.
"Chaaaarge!"
"Crush their legs!"
"One more on the right!"
One werewolf strayed too far into the center, so we encircled it, grazed down its health with focused attacks, trapped the two additional werewolves that ran in to help, and then struck, struck, and struck again!
The volleyball team launched their combo attack: they launched a long spear to keep the werewolves at bay, then would leap forward and bash them with a shield, before leaping in from behind to strike with the spear again—then they finished up with a final blow to the head with the shield. The spear was the set-up; the shield was the real weapon. We continued to beckon the werewolves into the impenetrable fortress of volleyball strikes from above.
"We're doing fine in the middle! Left and right, stay careful, and leave the rest to us!"
Another werewolf tried to break into the center ranks. This was our chance!
"Left and right, we're after it! But don't break formation too much—we just need enough to lure it in!"
Vice Rep C leapt nimbly at the werewolves, where she slashed at them to draw them back into our circle. She backed up to bring them into the range of Vice Rep A's attack, flipped back alongside Vice Rep A, and they started

shaving away the werewolves' health with a counterattack. They had broken the werewolves' coordination!
Another group of werewolves rushed in to help in a panic, but Vice Rep B and I attacked them: trailing, splitting them up, and then cornering them. Then we broke through the group of werewolves that had been broken apart by Vice Rep C and A's combo attack, isolating the wolves and allowing us to take them down. *Turns out their back is their weak point*, I noted, *but since they're so fast, you really need to corner them to take them out.*
Even though we couldn't perfectly coordinate as a group, if each party used their own combat skills to strategize, our victory was sealed!
Three werewolves in the middle, four over here, four with Kakizaki-kun's group, and three with the rearguard—we brought them all down. Oda-kun's group stopped the second wave of werewolves in their tracks and scattered them. We brought down two more.
The sports girls' offensive capabilities were starting to shine. Once we trapped the werewolves, they could eliminate them. The werewolves tried to beat a hasty retreat, but we advanced, able to reinforce our semi-circle formation now that we had fewer werewolves to deal with. Plus, we had healers on our side; we were better equipped for a drawn-out fight.
"Prepare your weapons!" I told the rearguard. "Don't let them get away!"
"On it!"
The rearguard readied their magic. Now the werewolves had no choice but to retreat or die…and they chose to retreat.
We had killed 16 so far, so that was more than a quarter down. We'd dealt damage to about as many. They couldn't regenerate health fast, so all we had to do was keep whittling them down.
Several of us were injured, but we could heal later, and our weapons were in nearly perfect shape. Our one sole resolution was not to let anyone die. Haruka-kun threw away his life to protect us, and we couldn't let his sacrifice go to waste.
"Hey, Class Rep?"
It was Oda-kun's group. They had returned from securing a safe retreat and finishing off respawned monsters. They reported that, as we suspected, the monsters weren't respawning—the dungeon was dying. The Dungeon King at the bottom floor had been defeated.
The only person who could've defeated the supposed level 100 Dungeon King was Haruka-kun. He must be making his way back up the dungeon, toward us.
"I guess he can't use the return gate… He technically didn't make his way down there."
Hmm. Yes, normally you could return to any floor you previously reached via the dungeon gate. I assumed no one had ever fallen into the pit to the bottom floor before, and it was a given that no one had defeated the Dungeon King until now. If there was any one crazy enough to do that in this world, the dungeon would be safer than the outside!

“Good work everyone, that secures our exit,” called Kakizaki-kun. “I’m wiped.”
Kakizaki-kun’s group went back to the 53rd floor, too. Now we should be able to finish off the werewolves, and we didn’t expect a boss on the 55th floor either. We could keep going, but I wouldn’t urge everyone forward if they weren’t ready to take it on.
The sports team girls came back from guarding the perimeter as well. “Go arts club! You’re crushing it!”

For some reason, we had stopped calling each other by our names lately. Names just didn't seem to do the job. *I wonder whose fault that is?*

"The arts club girls used to be much more suited to diversion that direct combat, but I feel like they've gotten better at fighting in the middle guard."

"It's 'cause they're using hallucinations—abnormal status and smokescreens. They messed up the werewolves' footing somehow, too."

"So flashy. You trying to imitate Haruka-kun or something?"

"Of course we aren't!" they shouted. "Don't insult us like that!"

Everyone had livened up. We had so much more to prove. We had learned to bounce back, even when the cards weren't in our favor…and we were leveling up, too, so we were literally stronger than ever before.

The book club president approached me. "Are you sure you want to stop here for today, Class Rep?" Incidentally, she was capable of inflicting mass status conditions and disrupting entire enemy formations. She was the last person you'd want to see in a battle.

"Everyone says they want to keep going," I said, sighing. "But I think that's it for today. We're all wiped."

"There's no need to rush," she agreed, turning away. "I think we're all worried about him, but Haruka-kun is making his way up toward us at this very moment, I know it."

Like me, she had been in the same school as Haruka-kun for eleven years, so she knew him as well as I did.

"You guys are *still* worried about Haruka?" Kakizaki-kun interjected. "Bruh, you *do* realize his strength has squat to do with his level and skills and junk? I ain't worried one bit about him!"

Kakizaki-kun's gang had only met Haruka-kun in high school, and they agreed with us as well. I never put my finger on why, but they seemed to treat Haruka-kun differently to how they treated everyone else.

"He's not your average guy. If you think too deeply about why he is the way he is, it makes less and less sense," concurred Oda-kun's group as one; they said it so assertively, they must have thought we were stupid to worry about him at all. Even Oda-kun's group had their own feelings about the situation.

"You guys, like, say that," pouted Vice Rep B, who we had already dragged back multiple times from trying to go ahead on her own, "but you're the ones rushing to him as fast as you can!"

"Isn't that *you?!*"

We had been friends since high school, and I trusted her deeply…so why did I feel like I understood her less than anyone? Did her personality change? I sensed she'd become more like Haruka-kun, somehow… *Since when was she such a bad person?!*

She fought in the vanguard, and the moment we took her eyes off her, she charged ahead of her own accord. She was supposed to be an Archsage, y'know? And somehow she never got even a single scratch in battle! Do

attacks just bounce off of her chest? *Boi-yoing,* like that*?* Was that her secret skill?

DAY 31

If order and procedure matter so much to you, don't drop me down a pitfall, damn it!

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
83RD FLOOR

HERE COMES THE TRAP ZONE! *Traps here, traps there, traps everywhere!* You'd think there'd be a limit to these things. There wasn't even room to walk! The whole floor was covered in traps.

"Oh, 83rd floor, must you do this to me? I mean, look at this place! It's traps on traps on traps!"

Miss Skeleton Rep never talked back, never insulted me…she just glared. I couldn't let it get to me.

"Ground Eater, Lv: 83." These monsters chewed giant holes in the floor and piled up in the middle of the passageway. My Trap Detection was going totally haywire with all these traps to detect.

If we dodged our way through the traps, we'd get gobbled up by the ground eaters. Why didn't they ever close their mouths? Was it okay to hold them open that long? Really? (Apparently, it was fine.)

I threw them some poison mushrooms. Really, really poisonous mushrooms. *That should work—they don't have poison resistance or anything.* Now the ground was writhing in pain… (Apparently, it worked.)

Here, take another one. The ground started shaking—an earthquake? Huh? They were dying now? A giant cavity opened up in the ground and a gigantic spellstone tumbled to the bottom.

"There are still fourteen ground eaters left," I said. "Is it really gonna be this easy? Are you sure? You double, triple, quadruple sure? Surely sure that you're sure, sea shells on the sea sure? Okay, just checking."

("Apparently, it is that easy" x 14)

Yep. We killed them all.

Ground eaters couldn't close their mouths for whatever reason, and nor could they move, so they ate anything and everything that came their way. They had massive vitality and HP stats, Perfect Physical Resistance and Perfect Magic Resistance skills, but no poison resistance whatsoever. They were just begging to be poisoned, right? And yet they just sat there with their giant mouths hanging open. Of course I'd throw poison mushrooms in there! They were like big, gaping signs: "Insert poison mushroom here!" That was why I asked ahead of time, to make sure it was okay.

I reached the final ground eater. It was trembling for some reason, but I already had it its approval to poison it. No sweat.

There was a hidden room on this floor as well, but it had a trap lying in wait. I was suspicious of the entire floor! But then…hoo boy. There was this one

patch of floor that was blatantly a different color. It may as well have been screaming at the top of its lungs, “Here I am! Here’s where the trap is!” This was clearly a disguised pitfall, right? Would there be another trap waiting if I skipped right over it? Maybe there was both a pitfall and a bonus trap. But then again, I could just use Airwalk to go over it… No problem, right? I wouldn’t even have to step on it.

It was super easy to avoid, but I felt bad about it. Someone went to all the effort of setting up the trap, so I almost touched it out of sympathy, but I had to avoid all traps, so… *Oh, no!*

In my attempt to avoid the pitfall on the floor, I bumped my head on the ceiling. Was that the true trap?!

“Oh, it’s a treasure chest. I’ve pretty much given up on my sex appeal at this point, but here’s the treasure chest, right on time! I’ve got a huge potential fortune weighing down my pockets, but sure, have a treasure chest! Man, I’m so sick of this freakin’ dungeon!”

Rubbing my head angrily, I pulled open the chest. Maybe the chest would feel bad for me and give me what I wanted? As, y’know, chests were in the habit of doing?

“Trap Ring: Automatically deactivates traps.” What a crock of bullshit! The order was completely cracked! Hey, you stupid dungeon, you’re supposed to give me the ring before the traps…although, to be fair, I am going through the dungeon in reverse.

I knew one thing for sure: my Trap Detection skill had been rendered utterly obsolete! It was the one skill I gained from falling down the pit, and now it was about as useful to me as a chocolate frying pan. If I’d had this back then, I would never have fallen down here in the first place. *That’s just cruel, dungeon.*

Assuming I came from upstairs in the correct order, I could have gone to this room first, gotten the Trap Ring, and used that to avoid the ground eaters. Made sense. Good job on planning out the dungeon, I got how it worked, but…really, now. Couldn’t the dungeon consider the people coming from downstairs, too? Just a little? I felt completely ignored!

Was I the bad guy here?! I destroyed every last ground eater, but you didn’t even need to kill them to advance normally! I was a murderer now, and for what? Fantasy worlds apparently mandated a complete lack of consideration for other people’s feelings. Oy vey, to say the least!

On to…what was it, the 82nd floor? I might clear a floor every five minutes or so, if I picked up the pace. Falling down took an instant, and now, after all this toil and trouble, I was only 20 percent of my way back up. This wasn’t a complete waste of time, though, since I got to meet a fancy new wielder of the Glare. Yup, she was glaring at me even now. No sign of stopping.

I poked a hole in the ceiling and looked up to find level 82 mirror boars. Was that referring to a physical mirror, or more of a reflection? And did the boar part mean a wild boar, or some sort of pet boar? They charged.

If they were physically made of mirrors, they'd likely have Magic Reflection…and if they were reflections themselves, then they should reflect me the hell out of here! Would it be too much to expect them to reflect themselves away from me?

According to Appraisal, they did have Magic Reflection. *Made of mirrors, then.* The bigger problem was that they had Crash Resistance, too. It was the most obvious skill for the monsters in this dungeon to possess, since they kept crashing down from above, but that was also how I defeated most of them. My usual strategy was off the table. They also had an ability called "Pig Eater." I bet if I gave them poison mushrooms they'd happily gobble them up in no time. Maybe I could use that to poison them, but that ability seemed like it would make them poison proof…yeah, probably. *My god, these things are ugly.*

"So an all-out fight, huh? Versus level 82 monsters? That means instant death for me! And there are 100 of them! Wait, huh, they're charging into each other? Impaling each other?"

Those boars were terrifying! Way to prove that the most necessary skill for any monster in this dungeon was either Crash Tolerance or Fall Tolerance!

I went up to the 82nd floor. The ground rumbled as they charged me, a surging wave of hulking boars. I barely had time to think before they would pulverize me, and the magic I cast did nothing. Time to get my impaling game on.

I had a ton of spears that the minotaurs from the 99th floor dropped. I opened a hole in the ground and crammed it full of spears sticking out of the rocks, as the boars were getting all hyped up to bum-rush me. Once I caught their attention, I lined up the spears in a tight formation without a single gap. Now…to wait. Being able to whip items out of my item bag within a certain range sure was handy.

Caught up in their frenzied charge, by the time the boars in the front realized what was going on, they couldn't stop in time—one boar after another charged head on into the minotaur spears.

No more charging for them. Now they were just a bunch of giant stationary monsters.

I used Airwalk to walk over the array of impaled boars, and landed on the other side. My handy "Wooden Staff?" was in my hand, as per usual. It was the first time in a while that I'd used my Shinto-Muso Cane Style. *There I go, keeping up the charade that it's a real style of martial arts.* It was all good until the fantasy world Shinto-Muso head office started receiving complaints about it, in my opinion.

In Japan, they have a saying about how boars can't move backward, but that was all wrong. They could stop on a dime; the boars behind them, though, wouldn't realize what was happening until it was too late. They ended up butting each other further into the line of spears, so the ones that did manage to stop got densely pressed in.

Now that they were packed together, they were too slow, too stupid to get away; I could cleanly slice through several at a time with Shinto-Muso. To further confuse them and make it harder to move, I used Earth Magic to carve big holes in the ground. Once they were trapped in the holes… extermination time! If I found myself in a risky situation, I could dip back behind my wall of spears or use Airwalk to float over their heads, where I was out of their reach, and launch a bunch of one-sided strikes from above. Next, I jumped into the field of impaled boars, swinging my staff around with all my might while moving quickly to avoid getting squashed. If I stopped moving, I'd lose momentum, get stuck among the boars, and get killed by them.

I had seen the way to fight before: I learned it by watching Miss Glare Armor Rep's flowing dance of blades. I connected every movement. I accelerated, shifted forward and back, dashed in a dance, exploded into pure speed, and danced with my blade. I slid into gaps between the boards and, slashed, sliced, slaughtered.

Pure flow: moving before thinking was nothing out of the ordinary for me, anyways. I would stop altogether if I took a second to think. Preemptively thinking, moving, acting; it was the ultimate one-sided preemptive strike. My sword flashed in all directions. I remembered the endless exchange of blows with the dungeon emperor—I had no choice but to remember it. In that fight, I connected sword attacks at unbelievable speeds, constructed endless fluid combinations, flung my staff eternally at blinding speeds. Halt the enemy with a dance, then overwhelm them with the flurry of a dancing sword.

My wordless, undulating waltz whittled the boars down in turn. Simple. Powerful. A close-range swords dance. So I flitted among the rabble, rotating and slicing them apart as I advanced. *Never stopping, never hesitating, constantly flowin*g.

I didn't expect it to look beautiful or anything. It was hardly even dancing, when you came down to it. But no matter how shapeless or ugly my dance was, it did its job, and it was nowhere near finished.

In the midst of the spears, the one and only Miss Glare Armor Rep had struck up a swords dance of her own, providing a pincer attack to mine. The moment that platinum armor leapt into a dance, her whole surroundings transformed into blank space. Instantaneous, without hesitation. Her sword quietly at the ready, ready to transform the world around her. If I didn't hurry, she'd kill all the boars before me!

"I feel like that's the first real fight we've had in a while," I said, putting away my staff after finishing off the last of them. "Took us long enough, when we've been in a dungeon this whole time! I'm telling you, it makes no sense."

Miss Glare Armor Rep drenched me in a storm of glares as she silently collected the spellstones. What was she mad about? I would’ve died if I fought on the ground like a regular guy!

The 81st floor was next. We were advancing slowly, but surely, and still had a long way to go like always. And as always, a glare was trained on me. Was this girl really a skeleton?

DAY 31

The cunning jerk who so easily tricks other tricksters—he's after my damn sex appeal!

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
82ND FLOOR

I TOOK A LITTLE NAP. I set up the anti-magic tent and put some traps around it, too. Miss Armor Glare Rep stood watch, which was the greatest defense we had. She'd hold off anything that attacked; she was the strongest thing in this dungeon by far! Was it strange that the safest I've ever felt in this fantasy world was inside the Ultimate Dungeon?

Leveling up was practically impossible for me, but I must've leveled up *somewhat* by this point. Shouldn't Miss Skeleton and I have leveled up a lot?

"Status."

NAME: Haruka
RACE: Human
LV: 16
JOB:—
HP: 276
MP: 294
VIT: 254
POW: 256
SPE: 290
DEX: 286
MIN: 299
INT: 313
LUK: Max (Above Limit)
SP: 1774
COMBAT SKILLS: Peerless Cane Mastery Lv3, Avoid Lv3, Ascertainment lv7, Magic Infusion LvMax, Life or Death Lv8, Rapid Movement Lv7, Bubble Lv3
MAGIC: Heat Lv7, Teleport Lv4, Gravity Lv2, Holding Lv2, Four Elements Sorcery Lv2, Wood Lv8, Lightning Lv8, Ice Lv7
SKILLS: General Health Lv9, Sensitivity Lv8, Body Manipulation Lv4, Walking Mastery Lv3, Servitude Lv9, Uncover Lv2, Clairvoyance LvMax, Presence Sensing Lv2, Enemy Reveal Lv1, Magic Control Lv2, Presence Concealment Lv8, Stealth Lv9, Hiding LvMax, Map Lv8, Insentience Lv4, Physical-Proof Lv2, MP Absorption Lv2, Revival Lv1, Supreme Thinking Lv1, Dash Lv8, Airwalk Lv7, Overclock Lv9, God's Eye Lv8, Mimicry Lv5, Area Analyze Lv3, Trap Detection Lv3

TITLES: Shut-In Lv8, NEET Lv8, Loner Lv8, Bane Sorcerer Lv2
ABILITIES: Corporate Proactiveness Lv6, Master of None Lv9, Blockhead Lv9
EQUIPMENT: Wooden Stick?, Clothes Set?, Leather Glove?, Leather Boots?, Cloak?, Contact Lenses?, Ring of the Destitute, Item Bag, Monster Bracelet Power+39% Speed+26%, Vitality+19%, Black Hat

I supposed my stats were encouraging me to be a high-speed magic user, but I couldn't see it happening. Was I supposed to charge in at opponents and then use magic on them?

Hey, though, four level-ups! This place was crazy! Four level-ups, in just a few days…I guess I did trounce a ton of level 99s left and right. I wasn't *really* fighting, but I finished them all off, and must have gotten a ton of experience because of it.

Supreme Thinking seemed to be a combination of my previous abilities Parallel, Serial, and High-Speed Thinking. How had Packing turned into Holding, though? That was a totally different name!

Movement changed into Teleport, but did that mean I could still use movement magic like before? I should practice to find out; it would be seriously bad for me if I couldn't. Teleport sounded awesome, but also dangerous. Why couldn't Movement just level up normally? Teleport sounded like it was going to send me inside more walls that were actually pitfalls!

Even though I had just gotten Area Analyze and Trap Detection, they were already level 3. I must say it pissed me off a little that, since falling through the pit, I'd been through enough to already raise it to level 3.

Stamina Regeneration had surpassed mere Regeneration to become Revival. Wouldn't a normal progression be Hyper Stamina Regeneration? Revival…so I would come back to life?! What if I was completely killed? Or torn to pieces? I was sure that what's-his-name wouldn't be too pleased about that.

The growth in my combat skills was out of control, too, although it'd be fair to call me a master stick-wielder at this stage. I definitely improved in my battle with Miss Dungeon Emperor, that fight was in another world altogether. And we were already in another world!

Now it was time to get up.

"Good morning!" I called out to her. "Did anything happen? Are you sleepy? Do you need a nap?"

She shook her head. It was a questionable practice, not letting your servants sleep or giving them any food…still, decked out in all her jewels, you would've thought she was Miss Celebrity. That would probably clear me in any labor standards inspections. The labor-protection department should be more worried about *me,* working this much and still technically counting as a NEET!

Miss Armor Glare Rep had also leveled up a bunch:

NAME: Angelica
RACE: —
LV: 08
JOB: —
HP: 280
MP: 291
VIT: 256
POW: 265
SPE: 307
DEX: 301
MIN: 288
INT: 298
LUK: 99
SP: 77
COMBAT SKILLS: Sword Goddess Lv1, Warrior Goddess Lv1, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?
MAGIC: Spell Goddess Lv1, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?
SKILLS: Divine Destiny Lv1, Certain Kill Lv1, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?
TITLES: Guardian, Trueblade, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?
ABILITIES: ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?
EQUIPMENT: Platinum Armor, Sword?, Storage Cloak, Eternal Fortune Ring, Element Necklace, Blessed Bangle

She had me beat in stats already! Most likely, she was returning to her previous golden age. Even at level 1, all of her stats were high, 99 apiece, and she got stat boosts of 20+ every level! Now *that* was a cheat skill! Don't get me wrong, I was glad to be level 16, but she was way past me just at level 8.

Apparently she was a goddess, too! Sword Goddess, Warrior Goddess, Spell Goddess…a goddess of war, apparently. She even had Divine Destiny—did that mean she would become a literal goddess sometime, and get "Goddess" listed as her job? I better pray to her just in case. That might pay off in the future, unlike praying to the old dude I met.

The first time I looked at her status, her race was Skeleton, so that had been reverted somehow. She was still unemployed, though…even after all of the spellstone gathering.

That made us an unemployed duo. Could someone without a job really become a god? That old dude didn't seem to have a job either; he was just an old-timer suffering from dementia.

I treated her like a goddess, dressing her up in all that fancy gear. She looked extravagant as all hell. Meanwhile, I was cosplaying as a villager. I was pleased with my growth, all the same; my stats were advancing well. But I was far, far off from the numbers needed to compete with the monsters on the 80th floor.

For now, I decided to go to the hidden room. There was still a chance that a sex-appeal-boosting item could be tucked away somewhere around here. You never know! *Please let it be here!* I'd be thrilled enough to get an item with a Lecture Evasion effect, or a Lecture Reflection skill. I *didn't* want anything to do with Lecture Resistance, though. I was plenty worried about developing that on my own.

The cruel, coldhearted treasure chest only offered a meager "Magician's Glove: Magic Manipulation bonus (large). Dexterity bonus 30%." Could I use a magic trick to boost my appeal?

So it was a pair of gloves. Magician's gloves that had something to do with Magic Manipulation and another skill, Sleight of Hand. What, was I a magician now? That just sounded like a bogus trick, a shady combination. They were good skills on their own, but together? Suspicious as hell! I could use them, but I didn't want to end up with a new title like Fraud Magician! I was sure that the Magician's Glove would get its chance eventually, although my Spearshield Gauntlets had proven totally useless as well. I tried punching with my left hand and making all sorts of sound effects, but nothing… Were these items literally ever going to come in handy?

I regained my composure and peeked up at the 81st floor. It was…an aquarium. It looked like a date spot. I had never been to a date spot because I had never had anyone to go with, though, so I wouldn't know.

"Swordfish, Lv: 81." They seemed to sparkle. Were those the monsters…? Wait, wait, f-i-s-h spells—fish! The description didn't say whether they were edible. Worst luck.

Watching from below, they looked like literal swords swimming through the air. Nope, that was inedible. Completely inedible! Why call it a fish, then?! I already took out my soy sauce and everything! My griddle, too! Pure cruelty!

How were these any different from the Living Sword that I fought earlier? These swordfish just looked like swords, but they were alive, and also fish? They would definitely cut their way out of a net, and they didn't seem to have mouths, either, so good luck catching them with a rod. Poison bait wouldn't work. Not even a good smoking would turn them into something edible…which was a shame, because smoked swordfish sounded so darn delicious.

They swam around the room, glimmering. It looked to be a whole colony of them. I'd end up with more holes than a sieve if I attacked them—I might even end up as sashimi. Hey, who's the fish here?!

I tried using Heat Magic to lower the temperature, which made their movements gradually slower. They didn't seem to fare well in the cold… maybe because steel chills fast? Once I lowered the temperature enough, I used Ice Magic to freeze them in place. Refrigerated swordfish! Well, they were more swords than fish.

Crack!

I roamed around snapping them apart. When I beat the frozen, immobile swordfish again the wall, they cracked apart, dead. I felt a glare glare against the back of my head. *C'mon, I'm working really hard*, *here*, I thought. My hands were freezing cold! Gimme a break!

There were so many of them. I took half and left the other half to Miss Glare Armor Rep. Her hands didn't seem like they were getting cold. Was she glaring at me? Whatever for?

Onward to the 80th floor, which was sure to house a boss. *Isn't it overkill to have a boss once every five floors?* This was already my sixth boss, so I'd stopped feeling any way at all about it, but at least having only one monster would be easier to deal with…especially in terms of picking up spellstones. Gathering all of them up took forever—longer than actually beating the monsters—and we had a whole colony here!

The self-proclaimed boss of the 80th floor was a level 100 Demon Swordsmaster. Not a king, for once! Shocking. So, this thing had unparalleled sword skills. I'd flip out if it had a spear or something held back, but it wouldn't surprise me either, not at this stage. Demons also tended to be stronger and flashier than monsters; sneakier and more treasonous, too. The essential nature of demons was to deceive. Meaning that this Demon Swordsmaster could very well be wielding a stick!

One thing was for sure—it would be a most sneaky and treacherous enemy, and unlikely to attack head on. It would try to spring some trap, or feed me poison, or lead me hurtling down a pitfall, or smoke me out! What kind of sneaky bastard would lower himself to such tricks?! And why did I feel like we'd get along? Not even that we'd just get along! I bet we would set off on a journey together to raise our appeal. Demons probably had to put up with all sorts of scoldings.

That was what I thought beforehand. In reality, the demon was a huge disappointment. It attacked me with a sword, and head-on, too! Without laying a single trap! *How can you call yourself a demon!* It was an ordinary Swordsmaster, at best. Did that make the demons better people than me? How dare they be so straightforward?! This made *me* far more duplicitous than a demon! This demon thought it could make itself look cool, even raise its appeal without me—no chance in hell! This demon was going down!

A terrifying, overwhelming power oozed through every atom of its ghastly presence: brute force that left no gap, no matter how minute, in its defenses. It burst forward in a blinding leap of speed, drawing its sword and bringing it down on me in an ultimate, single slash.

Bonk bonk.

Great! It fell into my pitfall. Then I beat it to death. Nothing besides me would be allowed to get more sex appeal. It all belonged to *me!*

"I can't believe it tried lower my sex appeal," I hissed. "Only a demon would attempt such a horrible crime! It proved itself a demon in the end, I guess. Typical, impertinent demon!"

All I got in response was a glare. Miss Glare Armor Rep had both swords in her hands in a fighting stance, as if ready to strike. It wasn't my fault that it fell into the hole! That demon was trying to lower my sex appeal! There was nothing wrong with sending a treasonous demon into hole.

What kind of Swordsmaster doesn't pay attention to its footing? Clearly, it just stuck the Swordsmaster name on to itself because it sounded cool. This deadbeat owed me an apology! I didn't care if it was a level 100, a demon, a Swordsmaster, whatever—*no one* was allowed to lower my sex appeal. No one!

I was just protecting my sex appeal, that was all, it was an act of self-defense! I didn't do anything wrong.

Instead of a spellstone, there was…a sword. "The Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds (The Grass-Cutting Sword): A sword of gods. Tears apart and destroys evil spirits. POW, SPE, DEX, LUK 30% bonus. ? ? ?"

A sword of gods, eh? Used to destroy evil spirits…?! What the hell?

"You were the evil spirit!" I bellowed. "You were a literal demon! And now *you're* destroyed! What is a demon doing, wielding a god's sword? Of course you were destroyed! That's practically suicidal! There, proof that none of this was my fault!!"

None of it fit together. What had that demon been trying to do? Its intentions were a complete mystery to me…so maybe it would get along with the meatheads. Yeah, go hang out together with your fellow idiots!

"Wouldn't a demon wielding a god's sword just weaken it?! Choose your weapon a little more carefully, stupid demon! It's impressive you were even alive by the time I got here. Why didn't you have some typical demon sword? How did you end up with a *god's* sword? You can't use that!"

I went on dissing the 80th floor demon boss for a while. It deserved it! I couldn't let that injustice go lightly.

DAY 31?

Are all those chains and spikes for sex appeal? They just make you look tough.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
80TH FLOOR

I EVENTUALLY GOT TIRED of dishing out disses on the 80th floor of the dungeon. I picked up the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds. Somehow, the incarnation of greed herself, Miss Glare Armor Rep, didn't seem to need it. Could she not use a god's sword because she used to be a skeleton? She had plenty of blessed items, though, and she seemed fine with those. Maybe she was just picky… Her silvery white armor and crimson cloak made for a striking combination. Was that it? Did she only care about appearances?!
You got the god's sword if you did the dungeon properly. That sword then allowed you to purify the darkness on the lower floors. That made so much sense! *Why did it have to make me fall past it all?! I could've just done it in order!*
I wanted all the 30 percent bonuses, so I added it to my "Wooden Staff?"—now that I had three weapons in total inside it. I could add four more. It didn't feel any heavier, for some reason. How come its simple wooden stick design hadn't changed at all, either? A wooden stick and a black hood…I was looking more and more like a criminal. I mean, that's what I've looked like this entire time, but when the person next to me is in skin-tight white armor…*is it just me, or has economic inequality increased?*
Next was the 79th floor. I was finally in the 70s. I had to get through the 70s to get back home, and there was no such thing as a shut-in that didn't get back home! Why, then, did I suspect I'd spent more time living outside of my cave than in it? For a while I lived in a tent outside of my cave, too. Hardly a shut-in life. I was more homesick for my cave than I was for the real world.
Unable to return to my home, I was stuck in my life in the dungeon. At least thanks to Area Analyze I never got lost.
Not even once! I longed for something a bit more like your typical light novel adventure. Y'know, "Should I go right? Or left?! Curse this dungeon!" You needed scenes like that, or you couldn't really call it an adventure. I was practically walking in a straight line, using Area Analyze and Map to get around. That didn't meet the requirements for an exploration! I wasn't exactly complaining, since they were so useful…but…you know what I'm getting at, don't you?
Grumbling to myself as I easily found my way, I peeped up at the 79th floor. "Spike Viper, Lv: 79." There were snakes up there, and poisonous ones at that; each snake was about forty feet long. *Let's see, the venomous pit viper*

from the Amazon was the most famous one, but there was the Japanese viper too, and the poisonous Okinawan viper…were they all friends? They had to be, right? They were definitely poisonous, so why did they need spikes? Were they to prevent them from slipping?
The snakes' spikes kept them attached to the ground. They either didn't move, or couldn't. Maybe they were hibernating? Whatever the reason, I easily sliced off all their heads.
I took a look at their status. "Gobble," "Entwine," and "Constrict." *How are those combat skills?* Well, it definitely would've hurt if they entwined their spikes around me. I'd turn into a sieve for sure, all over again.
"Why are these vipers so spiky? Their pattern looks like chains, so how does that tie into spikes? Not a fan of the chains? Oh, I get it. Trying to stand out from the serpentine crowd, are we? 'You can't get me, I'm not like other guys!' Though you aren't really 'guys', you know? You're snakes."
In the end, I cut off all the immobile vipers' heads and collected the spellstones. They had the skill "Heat Sensing," but it didn't help them notice me lower the temperature before they were frozen in place.
Ice Magic was a no-go here, since there were too many of the snakes to attack at once. but temperature-altering magic—or maybe you could call it anti-reptile magic?— had a wide range. I could sell the snakeskins for a huge profit had I collected them, but the monsters all disappeared shortly after dying. A huge bummer. Imagine if it were crocodile skin!
The Grass-Cutting Sword had gained the effects of my old Magic Sword as well, so it sliced cleanly through each of the snakes without an ounce of effort. Magic Infusion and Packing Magic were powerful enough to cut the snakes too, but it felt nowhere near as good to use those.
Just what was my trusty "Wooden Staff?" trying to become? It was born a wooden stick, and remained exactly that in terms of appearance. Despite how magnificently it sliced apart armored monsters, it looked like nothing more than a regular old beating stick. Swinging it around still looked completely unrefined!
"So we've got the 78th floor next," I said. "I think if we were in the 40s…no, the 30s, I could fight the monsters head on? Nah, there'd be too many…so the 20s? Great, only 50 floors left before I can properly fight anything! Some dungeon crawlers we are!"
The next floor had level 78 vanishing wolves. They looked like…wolves. Was it just me, or did this fantasy world have a terrible ratio of monster girls? If some showed up…yikes, I'd be totally unable to kill them. What's worse, I'd probably end up using Servitude!
I did have Miss Skeleton Rep here, though she seemed kinda mad at me for some reason.
Time to make these vanishing wolves vanish for good. They wouldn't fool me—I knew no monster would ever get rid of themselves. Moments after they disappeared, they would reappear and strike. If they didn't reappear,

that meant they'd been exterminated. That's what happened when you were banished, after all. Or wait, it was "vanished," right?

If I attacked them head on, I would be the one to vanish, for sure. Their Vanish abilities were bound to activate the moment I got in close. This might be tricky.

More pressing was that they were level 78, so even if they didn't Banish me to some faraway realm I still had no way of winning. There were about eighty of them, with Pack Tactics, too. They could launch a coordinated attack of eighty wolves. *No effing chance!*

Bonk, splash!

I whipped out some vinegar and sprinkled it, sprayed it, sent good ol' vinegar all over the place. The 78th floor was huge, but one barrel should be enough. I used Holding Magic to compress the vinegar and spray it over the wolves. I had bought a whole barrel since it was so cheap, but it felt pretty wasteful all the same to sprinkle the lot over these wolves. I felt very conflicted.

Once I cornered the wolves with my vinegar spray, I pulverized paralysis mushrooms and sprinkled the wolves with that, too. Mushrooms were no object—I had practically an unlimited number of those. I didn't want to use red pepper if I didn't have to, though. *Save that for cooking!*

After one brave sniff, the wolves wailed and sprinted away. I herded them into a dead-end, where Miss Glare Armor Rep finished them off.

Just like with the kitty cats, I didn't feel great about killing so many puppers. These puppers would bite my head off if they could, okay? I had no choice!

Apparently their Vanish ability only made them disappear for two or three seconds, and then they just appeared in the same place again, where they would be slaughtered ruthlessly. I kept on sprinkling vinegar. I imagined no one had ever sprinkled this much vinegar in this dungeon before.

Now the dungeon reeked of vinegar. It smelled awful! Far from my nose getting paralyzed, tears stung my eyes instead! Why did my nose hurt so much? Shouldn't the paralysis powder numb it? We gathered up the spellstones on the double and rushed to the 77th floor.

This is a disaster, I thought, I can't stay in a dungeon that smells like vinegar! I know I was the one who sprayed it everywhere, but the point stands!

DAY 31?

Sure, there's emotional damage, but the physical damage hits different.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
77TH FLOOR

SINCE THE 78TH FLOOR reeked of vinegar, we rushed up to the 77th floor before checking what was there. Maybe we'd find something lucky? Double sevens meant good luck, right? *Maybe this floor contains what a high school boy has been hoping for?!*

Monster girls, please, I thought, a succubus, please. I'll attack for once, rather than the other way around. Please, dungeon!

"Imp, Lv: 77." Tiny flying devils, creatures that lacked the slightest fragment of appeal for a horny high school boy. *Stupid dungeon! Normally you'd have monster girls on the 77th floor!* They had little horns sprouting out of their bald heads. Were they mocking me? Was this how you crush a high school boy's dreams?!

"Ugyaaah!" they wailed.

This is no time and place to "ugyaaah," foolish creatures! Why are you dying? Let me say my piece! How dare you trample on the dreams of an innocent, horny high school boy!

"Gyooiiii!" they screamed.

Go "gyoi" yourselves! Time for you to get trampled instead!

"Giiiii!" they shrieked.

I've had enough "gii" for a lifetime, didn't you hear me?! What kind of creatures flopped over dead just because they got glared at? Did they have a problem with my face? I thought they were demons! Why so scared? I was busy being mad at them! And now they were flying away! I just wanted to lecture them, and they decided to off themselves instead! Had no one ever taught them to listen to other people? How dare they commit suicide in the middle of *my* scolding!

After all of my high hopes for the 77th floor, what did I find? Imps! *Bald* imps!

I turned around to find Miss Glare Armor Rep shivering with fear. She was supposed to be a dungeon emperor, so why was she creeping away from me? She used to be a dullahan, a lich, *and* a Deathking—the most fearsome existence in this world! She had no right to be scared! This was all beginning to hurt my feelings!

All the imps were dead, and my heart lay in pieces. I wore a face that could scare even a dungeon emperor, and it had seemingly shocked all the imps to death before we launched a single attack. *Those foul demons!* I guess that wasn't much of an insult for imps.

I stood in the middle of the dungeon with a skeleton patting me gently on the back.
I only wanted to vent my anger, but I killed all the imps in the process. There were a lot of spellstones left on the ground.
Great! On to the 76th floor. Let's move on to the real adventure! Or the real venting session?
Did the dungeon heed my cries? The 76th floor promised level 76 lizard people. There may well be monster girls here, albeit ones unlikely to please any sane high school boy.
There were both males and females, and they had lizard bodies *and* lizard heads. How could you call these lizard *people?!* They had no human qualities! You could tell the males apart from the females, but it hardly made a difference: their bodies were covered in scales! These were lizards and nothing more! Well, they stood on two feet and held spears, but besides that, pure lizards!
They resembled dinosaurs more than anything. Any of the qualities a reasonable high school boy hoped for or dreamed of were nonexistent here.
I'll make you stupid lizards nonexistent!
"I'm going home! I hate this stupid dungeon! I wanna go home!"
I threw a tantrum. Ah, one more thing that was nonexistent: my emotional maturity.
A frost settled down across the whole floor, leaving the area freezing cold. I lowered the temperature until the 76th floor was a freezer, then used Ice Magic. *Why wouldn't I? We know by now how effectively this deals with reptiles!*
Half of the lizards were completely frozen, and the other half moved in super slow motion.
I couldn't believe my bad luck streak. First, the imps on the 77th floor had dashed my high hopes there, and now a bunch of dinosaur girls…of course I was pissed off! I ruthlessly hunted them all down, alongside Miss Platinum Armor Glare, every last one.
Who wanted anything to do with a 99 percent-lizard lizard person (♀)? No one wanted this! A reptile collector? A dino-fetishist? There was one weird fetish if I've ever heard of one! I was struggling with an armor fetish already! Nowhere to even rest my damn eyes!
We collected the spellstones in the freezing cold and headed to the 75th floor. Another boss. We were a quarter of the way done, at last. Not nearly far enough to feel safe yet…maybe I'd feel better after I finished a third. I'd consider the layout of the dungeon once I got there, far away as it was. I'd deal with it later!
I wanted to take a break, but it was seriously cold. It stunk of vinegar below, it was freezing cold here—*what kind of miserable dungeon is this? A stinky dungeon…what in the*—no, I restrained myself. The former dungeon manager was standing right behind me! We both knew full well

who caused the vinegar stink! She'd probably get mad at me if I complained. Though she'd be quiet about it.
"We've conquered one quarter of the dungeon! Just three quarters left!" I paused. "Saying that tanked the mood, for some reason."
The boss was a "Chimera (All-Types), Lv: 100." A chimera, huh? I wanted to know what kind of chimera it was, but apparently it was all kinds, which didn't sound fair to me. Was my reward for mastering a quarter of the dungeon to face some bizarre fetish-collector boss?
Being "all-types" meant it was probably enormous. That was what having all-types meant, right? Right.
It was huge.
From head to tail it was about ten meters, and its back was about twice as tall as me, around ten feet tall. It was black, with six legs from either a tiger or a lion, and it had wings, though I couldn't tell where they came from. It had the face of a monkey, and that monkey reeked like an ugly old man. It had insect legs sticking out from its belly, wriggling, and a scorpion tail. Reptilian scales covered its back, and dog—or maybe wolf—heads stuck out from both shoulders. No horse bits, nor sheep, nor mouse, nor a bunch of other animals. "All-types" was a bit of a misnomer, huh. Where were the rest? Where were the kitty cats?!
A fireworks flurry of sword attacks hit, white light dancing through the air. The former dungeon emperor, Miss Platinum Armor Skeleton Rep, began to fight. This chimera was pretty strong, but not as strong as her. It went at her full-throttle, so I decided to sneak around and hit it from behind.
It was dangerous to get too close, so I extended my "Wooden Staff?"—about 20 yards should do the trick. Somehow my Weight Magic had become Gravity Magic. I used ex-Weight Magic with all my might, and struck!
The chimera had no time to look back. It couldn't afford to worry about me, not when it was dealing with that raging, glittering swords dance up front. I could whack it from behind.
Neither of us took a step forward, nor a step back. I kept whacking it, beating it, striking it, whipping with all my might, all from behind.
Neither of the two fighters could finish off the other, but all three of us increased the pace. I hit it from behind.
On the other side, the fireworks show continued. I kept hitting it from behind.
I didn't know how many swords she was wielding, how many arms and legs she was battling off. I just kept hitting. From behind.
All of the cracking sounds, all of the collisions became so fast that they blended into a single drone. I hit it from behind.
Then, the chimera and Miss Skeleton Rep advanced half a step forward, to prolong the fight, to end things for good. I hit it from behind.
Oh, did that do it? It dropped dead.

“Woooah! Don’t stab me with that glare! It has its own physical force! My body stings a little. I thought you only dealt emotional damage, but—don’t tell me that your glare does physical damage, too?!”
I shook off the prickling glare and went to check the boss item. It seriously stung! Let’s see…spellstones and a bracelet. It was another fancy one, too. “Monster Bracelet: Powers up all abilities.” This one had a simple design. I didn’t know what the limits of “all abilities” were, but “powers up” was new. Until now it always said “bonus” and gave a percentage. Why didn’t they standardize it? None of this made sense! I couldn’t compare it to anything else without a standard to base it on. Though I guess I never understood the standards of this world to begin with. Especially when it came to skill definitions. Did those mean anything? Or…were they only there to make fun of me?! It certainly felt that way!

DAY 32

Y'all gotta eat more fish. The lack of calcium is making you cranky.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
54TH FLOOR

FOR THE THIRD STRAIGHT ATTEMPT, we were unable to advance, all because of the physically tough, viciously powerful, and wildly instinctive werewolves. We *were* whittling them down, though. Twenty left. I swore that we'd beat them and keep going, onward to Haruka-kun.

"Stay in formation! Don't let them through!"

"We're launching a hit and run now! We won't let these werewolves stop us! Chaaarrrge!"

Shimazaki-san and her friends suddenly went wild and sliced apart the werewolves, blasting through the savage beasts with overwhelming force. The battle's tide turned in our favor in a matter of seconds!

Before long, we finally finished them off for good. We beat a whole group of level 54 werewolves!

"Let's rest here for the day," I said. "It should be fine. Let's set up camp."

Everyone shouted their agreement.

"Who's in charge of dinner? Get out the meat! Start chopping!"

"Grill's ready, pass those veggies!"

"Meat, meat, let's cook some meat!"

No one was seriously injured. A lot of cuts and bruises, but we set some stamina mushrooms to roast, so no worries there. Dinner looked…decidedly okay. *That's not, um, the prettiest food I've ever seen. Everyone's trying their hardest, I know…*

"I'm starving! Let's eat!"

The boys were worn out, too. To ensure a 100 percent victory over the werewolves, we broke through their ranks, divided and encircled them, then launched a close-range attack from the vanguard. This, alongside our tactical maneuvers, exterminated every remaining werewolf. Everyone was exhausted from running around so much. But we beat them. We finally beat them. Now we could go deeper.

The boys finished setting up the tents. I knew how tired they were, so it was time to let them eat and rest. First, dinner!

"That took forever!" exclaimed the nerds. "Those were some tough werewolves!"

The 54th floor alone took us two days to get through, and the enemies would only get stronger from here. But we had to keep going. No matter how long it took, no matter how strong the enemies were…because Haruka-kun was

fighting all by himself at this very moment, struggling to get up. The least we could do was to go and meet him.
Shimazaki-san and her friends were already over level 90. They kept leveling up way faster than the rest of us; it was a sign they were still getting experience from Haruka-kun. He was still fighting as well…alone. Against fierce enemies, alone. Heading higher and higher, alone.
Now all that remained was our nightly meeting. The girls' meeting… *There are boys here, but they don't stand out here at all?!*
"The next floor has bulls or something, right? Level 55 spiked buffalo?" asked Vice Rep A.
"A big group of them, too. Spikey-horned bulls that will charge right at us," added Vice Rep C.
"At least there's no boss. We can crush them in our individual parties, right?" asked Shimazaki-san.
"But like, we might just end up separated like we did against the werewolves…" said Vice Rep B.
That would be bad. The werewolves had split us up, putting us completely on the defensive. It took us a while to reestablish ourselves when the wolves had the upper-hand, so we were forced to retreat.
"Why don't we start in a defensive formation, and then split into groups?"
"That will, like, totally get us surrounded."
"Those buffalo are super-fast, I bet. Don't you think they'd break through our defensive formation?"
"That's terrifying!"
The herd of buffalo on the 55th floor were yet another pack of monsters. I'd prefer myself to split into groups and hunt them down, rather than fight them as a whole class. Sadly, there was a serious risk of individual parties getting separated.
I realized it had been a full month since coming to this world, but we only began fighting in the latter half. Despite that, everyone was used to fighting and was well-versed in battle tactics by this point.
The boys, socially clueless as always, would flawlessly execute our battle tactics the moment the fight begun. But in terms of our meetings? Yeah… they weren't much help.
Oda-kun and his friends made up the otaku squad, specializing in securing our defenses, able to defend and launch counterattacks with smothering effectiveness…but totally clueless the second a meeting started.
Then there was the meathead squad: Kakizaki-kun and his friends. Setting why they embraced that name aside, the meathead squad was endlessly adaptable, and rose perfectly to any occasion. In battle, they acted according to their own wishes, but they instinctively understood battle formations. They cooperated with us seamlessly on offense and defense… but in a meeting? Hopeless! As in, not even listening!
"Don't you guys have any opinions?!" we shouted at them.

“Huh? What?” Oda-kun looked up at us. “Well, if they attack us we’ll fight back, and if they don’t…we’ll split up and go after them.”
“Let’s just wait and see!” said Kakizaki-kun. “That’s a problem for later. We’ll go with whatever we think is best!”
Both battle strategies left everything to their on-the-spot instincts and quick wits. The girls, on the other hand, were worse off without a strategy in place. If we planned ahead and allowed each individual to play to her strengths, we were strong, but the hard part was the planning. Defense formations, hit-and-run maneuvers…another problem was how too many people were best suited for the rear guard. We also found it hard to agree on a strategy in the first place. I could never pick one best option, and always left it to the group.
“I think we should let them charge at us, jump out of the way at the last minute, and cut them down with a diagonal formation,” I suggested. “Not sure if we have the numbers for it, though…”
“We might not have enough of a vanguard. There are tons of buffalo down there.”
“At least eighty, yeah. They’re probably tough, too.”
“Still, they won’t be able to break up our formation if we stick close together. Spread out too much, and they’ll break through.”
“*Yeah, our left side was too loose!”* the girls hissed at Kakizaki-kun’s group. It hadn’t mattered that much.
“That’s why I’m saying we should take a diagonal formation, let them break through, then attack them from behind. If we can circle them, we might be able to exterminate them all at once. If they get away again, we can get back in our formation and dodge all over again.”
“Do you want us to play matadors?!” the girls yelled at me.
Yep, matador tactics. Tempt the bulls with a head-on attack, shift to dodge, and take them some of them down from the side. Then you could safely attack them from behind, where they were defenseless.
“We’d have to keep that formation for ages. Can we really keep up a dense defensive formation like that?”
“And what if we don’t get to them in time when we’re trying to attack them from behind?”
“We gotta think about where to actually attack them, too. In the rear?”
“We should go for their legs to topple them over. Hopefully they’ll get trampled by their own kind.”
“Let’s destroy them head on!” cried Shimazaki-san. “Right now he’s fighting, all alone—we’ll be fine, just let us go!”
That escalated fast. Still, now that we were all discussing it, the plan was taking shape. The girls all needed that.
The boys stared up at the ceiling, silently yelling, “Still not done?!” But we were all here for the same reason: Haruka-kun sacrificed himself to save us all. We had to return the favor.

There was no point in any of this if all of us weren’t there to greet him. If I hadn’t held people back, everyone would have raced downstairs to find Haruka-kun long ago.
We were still on the 54th floor. Haruka-kun was far below, in far worse circumstances, facing far more vicious, powerful enemies, alone. Struggling up to meet us.
If we encountered a herd of level 80 or 90 monsters, we would all be killed instantly.
I wanted to rush right to him, too. But we were still weak. We had to move carefully.
All we could do was go one floor deeper, in hopes of welcoming him back.

DAY 32?

They're pals, so I'd feel bad for splitting them up.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
74TH FLOOR

I TOOK THE MONSTER BRACELET. Miss Glare had the Platinum Armor, so she hardly needed to worry about any physical attacks, save perhaps a spank from behind. That view was more likely to knock me out than for her to suffer any damage, though.

The bracelet supposedly powered up "all abilities" but I didn't know how far that extended. Did it power up "NEET" and "Shut-in" and even "Loner," too?

The 74th floor was next. I had to deal with a stinging case of glare-itch on the back of my head the whole time, and now a bunch of level 74 metal scorpions were waiting for us! Soon enough, they were flipped over on their backsides, twitching madly. Their armor glinted dully; they were poisonous, as you'd expect.

Real scorpions are surprisingly fragile—they don't have real shells, so they'll die just from being crushed underfoot. These metal scorpions were coated in real, hard metal. There was no stomping these scorpions. I tried using smoke instead.

Scorpions are just spiders, right? Or friends of spiders. I'd feel bad for separating them from their spider friends! I would smoke them alive just like I did with the spiders—I'd have no inequality in this dungeon! They were true kin with the spiders, as they flipped over and twitching in the exact same way. They died in perfect equality.

The floor was dark, reflecting only the dull light of the scorpions. That frail light caught brilliantly on Miss Glare's shining figure, as she aimed her broadsword for a crevice in the scorpions' armor. She swept across the floor in a rain of sparkling light, severing the scorpions' heads. Behind her, a hooded guy kept emitting a big cloud of smoke.

If I compare myself to her, it's game over, I reminded myself. I was an official NEET. Even Miss Glare beat me in terms of titles.

We collected all the spellstones. Then came the fun part before heading up to the 73rd floor—hidden room city! Well, if you could even call it the fun part. You couldn't. Because the hidden rooms *still* didn't have my sex appeal.

The treasure chest didn't even have a lock. Would I ever need to actually use my Magic Key?

"Resistance Greaves: Perfect resistance. All-magic, physical attack, and physical impact resistance bonus (large)." Like shin guards? That European armor that covered up to your knees? Apparently "greaves" meant shins

and shin guards in old French. This was European armor, so I showed it to Miss Glare Armor Rep, but she didn't seem interested. Let me guess: because they were black? Was she only into white armor? How vain!
She was a girl, so I guess she had the right to be picky. Her armor had Perfect Invincibility anyways, plus Max Power-up, so she certainly didn't need any greaves.
Maybe I could slot them into my "Leather Boots?" for now.
I gave it a try, and it worked. Thank you, Sir Treasure Chest! This was the next best thing after my sex appeal! It looked like Perfect Resistance would even soften impacts from crashes. I could crash without having to worry anymore! I could crash rest-assured!
Did I really not have to worry about crashing anymore? I mean, I was bound to fall down again. And crash into things. I'd love for it to hurt less.
Crashing *does* hurt, I'll have you know.
I was interested in crashing into something at full speed to test it…but next up were tortoises. Crashing into tortoises sounded painful. Pass.
Yep, giant tortoises were next up, though these tortoises had alligator heads. Alligator-tortoises? Apparently not; Appraisal told me they were level 73 "Reflection Turtles." There were only four of them, lined up in a big passageway. *Yeah, I'm good.* Each one was as big as a house, creeping slowly along. Even if you promised me it wouldn't hurt, I'd never shake the certainty that it sure as hell would.
I was surprised they didn't have some long name that spoke to their alligator aspects— Alligator Tortoise, or whatever. They were basic turtles, even though their heads were *definitely* alligator heads. Was it just the heads? What about their fangs? Uh…what was I after, here?
What mattered was that they were *reflection* turtles. So…would they reflect my attacks, or were they mere reflections themselves? How was that any different from the mirror boars? They had Magic Reflection, so they must reflect attacks, which meant if they were enormous, reflecting reflection turtles in the middle of the road, they'd make it surprisingly safe to come home late at night. *Don't tell me they use monsters for traffic control in this world?!* No, no, those things had to be dangerous. Monsters were more dangerous than bad traffic!
I dug a hole with magic right under the giant turtle's front right foot, then a hole underneath the front left foot. One hole under the back right foot, one under the back left foot.
There. Now it couldn't move.
I whacked the now-immobile turtle in the head. It was a turtle, but couldn't manage to retract its head. I kept whacking it. Over and over again.
Guggaaaaaah!
It tried to bite me, but couldn't get close enough. My staff was extendable, after all.
And since the turtle was too big, it plugged up the road. The other turtles behind it couldn't get any closer, allowing me to keep whacking.

Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Slash!
Miss Armor dove in from the side to slice its head clean off. Did she get bored or something? The turtle had Slash Resistance! How had she cut through it? Not that I cared, as it saved me some time. Was this girl in a rush?
The next turtle advanced toward me, so I dug some more holes under its feet. Soon after…
Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Slash!
We took them all out that way. What with them being gigantic, and us fighting twelve of them in total, the maze on this floor had felt way more cramped than other floors. Now with them gone, it felt like the biggest store yet.
The spellstones were big, too. Were the bigger ones worth more, or maybe worth bigger money? I wasn't super into the idea of bigger money. I guess I'd have to ask at the trade-in counter.
On to the 72nd floor.
I didn't sense any hidden rooms on this floor, so I made a little hole to sneak a peep upstairs. How many peeps was this now? These had to be the lamest peepholes ever.
I couldn't tell how Packing Magic differed from its supposed upgrade, Holding Magic. I used Hold on the ceiling, opened a hole with Earth Magic and saw…dead trees.
"Ent, Lv: 72." These were trees! What possible fun could be had, peeping at trees from a low angle?!
These were magic trees, with magic attacks and perfect magic resistance. And even though they were trees, they also had resistance against slashing and physical attacks; they even had the combat skills Slash and Stab! I supposed my stick could slash and stab, so I shouldn't make fun of 'em for it. Miss Glare glared at me before I could even try.
Time for a nice little bonfire! Sheesh, lighting stuff on fire sure makes ya hot.
They burned well, as dead trees should. Now we could throw a dungeon bonfire party! The glares did put a damper on things, though, I admit.
"C'mon, they're trees!" I said. "Dead trees! I mean, they had magic resistance, but using Airwalk and spritzing them with oil from above was enough to get the job done. We want them to burn! They're dead tree monsters, y'know—they were begging to be burned! They provoked me! So now they're burning. *Man*, it's hot!"
Vegetable oil, olive oil, sesame oil. After dousing all the ents in a nice layer of oil, I lit it on fire.
They all burned to the ground.
What a waste of oil. The general store didn't have much in stock and what they did have was expensive. To save on oil, I tried condensing the oil into a spray-mist, but setting it on fire caused a giant explosion and sent us flying!

That hurt! I was a victim of revenge! Not from the ents, they were totally dead, but from the fire!

In the hidden room, there was an even bigger dead tree, a level 72 Elder Ent, which I also set on fire. It took a while, but once it burned down I got its spellstone. Then I opened the treasure chest it left behind and earned a bonus drop item: “Elder Ent Staff: Increases magic power and magic control. MP 50% bonus. Attribute bonus (large).”

So it was a magic staff. . It didn’t have a bonus for Satisfying Whackfeel, which was the most useful property a staff could ever have for me. Swords got physical power-ups, so why were staves stuck with magic bonuses? It’s a weapon for bludgeoning! A freaking stick!

The treasure chest contained a legendary, perfect revival elixir! Wait, no, revise that: it was actually a legendary, perfect revival mushroom. *Why did it look so familiar?* The moment I put it in my bag, it got lost among the thousands of other mushrooms within.

DAY 32?

Could a guardian spirit affect someone's sex appeal?

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON

72ND FLOOR

MISS GLARE ARMOR REP didn't seem to want the staff. She already had Spell Goddess, for one, and she preferred using a sword anyways. Was she turning into a meathead herself? One of *those* meatheads?! What a tragedy that would be.

The Elder Ent Staff had great effects, so I combined it into my "Wooden Staff?"— "Increases magic power and magic control. MP 50% bonus. Attribute bonus (large)." That was a serious cheat item for a mage! I could now dig pitfalls with ease, smoke out insects, even freeze reptiles… *That doesn't sound all that powerful, now that I say it aloud.* A Whackfeel power-up would serve me way better.

This dungeon was full of monsters with magic resistance or magic invincibility. A significant number were invincible to physical attacks as well —*this dungeon should be impossible, right?*

The 71st floor had level 71 War Puppets: soldier puppets designed for combat, armed with a round shield and a long spear and dressed in armor. They stood as a large group in a phalanx.

The phalanx is a dense formation of heavy infantry, mainly spearmen with large shields. Phalanx tactics, where the formation attacks as a whole, are supposed to be incredibly effective in warfare. It confronts an oncoming enemy with overwhelming offense and defense—but didn't they realize it was super dated, too? They used it in, like, ancient Greece and Macedonia.

The puppets had crash resistance, so I couldn't bring them hurtling down here. I had to go up to the 71st floor. There was no point in smoking or freezing them—they even had fire magic resistance. And since they were puppets, paralysis or poison were out.

So Miss Glare Armor Rep and I lined up on the 71st floor, and waited for their oncoming phalanx attack. They charged at us, raising a cloud of dust. There wasn't a single gap or crevice for us to break through in the frontal wall of spears headed straight towards us.

And then, they fell. They fell over, pushed into each other, piled up over one another, and eventually crushed each other.

Phalanx formations can only be used in wide, open spaces after all. I dug a hole with my magic, and since the dungeon passageways were narrow, they couldn't go around it. All they could do was fall and get trampled. There was only one way for their massive, densely packed army to go.

Since I knew where they were going to run, it was easy to dig directly in front of them. Then I poured oil into the hole and lit it on fire. It wasn't magic, so it burned them right up. Fire magic resistance not applicable.
"What a waste," I lamented, "I was looking forward to cooking some fried food with all this oil. All I wanted to do was eat karaage chicken, and I've already used half of my oil! See, this is why I don't like these fire strategies."
Grumbling miserably to myself, I picked up spellstones. Surprisingly, Miss Glare Armor Rep, who looked sympathetic, was surveying the battlefield. She wasn't glaring. I felt a hint of loneliness in her gaze.

Next up, the 70th floor. Another boss. "Orthrus, Lv: 70." Huh? Only level 70? Up until now, the boss every five floors had been level 100! Was that just a pattern for the last 25 floors? I hadn't traveled down this dungeon in the regular order, so I had no idea how it worked.
Anyways, I faced Orthrus. It was a massive dog, like Cerberus but minus one head.
Swoosh, slash!
Miss Platinum Armor danced across the dungeon floor; her dual swords sparked through her path in silver and sliced cleanly across the twin massive heads of Orthrus. They toppled to the ground. I backed her up with vinegar.
We were facing a dog, same thing as wolves, so vinegar would do the trick. Definitely not oil, that was too expensive, and even though I bought so much of it, I only had half of my stock left. *All I wanted was some fried food! I take my fried food very seriously! And I'm never, no matter the cost, gonna use my bell peppers or black pepper!*
My job was to make a giant ball out of vinegar and throw it right at the Orthrus' noses. It had two heads, but only two front legs, so it couldn't brush the vinegar off its nose without falling to the ground. It fell prostrate. Miss Glare Armor Rep swooped down on it to chop off the heads. The dog had no chance.
I felt good. Maybe it was the effect of adding the Elder Ent Staff into my staff, but my vinegar ball moved fast and I could control it perfectly. When Orthrus tried to bolt, I made the ball chase after it. The 50 percent bonus to magic power and magic control was outstanding.
Maybe the Magician's Glove, which boosted my magic manipulation and dexterity, was also coming into play. Would the Spearshield Gauntlets ever be useful? And then there was the Magic Key, which we may as well have forgotten about, and also the Trap Ring. The moment I got that, all the traps disappeared! Even though I was actively searching for them!
I had a nice collection of cheat items on my hands now, but they barely came in handy. This was a fantasy dungeon where chucking vinegar proved more effective.

I practiced with the Spearshield Gauntlets and their physical and magic attack nullification, too—*hiyah!* with my left hand. I even tried shouting, "Gyaaaaaah!"
I picked up the spellstone and the drop item, "Submission Choker: A necklace that forces the wearer into submission."
Uh…
I'd pretend I didn't see that one. *Yep. Let's go with that.*
Right? I could hardly give it to Miss Glare Armor Rep, and just having it in my inventory would make my sex appeal plummet even further. My sex appeal, which had already fallen way underground due to my use of Servitude, was ready to plunge into a legitimate nose dive! My appeal was probably way, way below the 100th floor now. Maybe even deep enough to dig up a new hot spring.

In better news, I made it into the 60s. The 69th floor. The enemies were down to level 69 as well—as if I stood a chance against enemies like that! Shouldn't the strongest dungeon enemies max out at around level 20 or something? I was trying to bask in how I finally got above level 15. I wanted to lodge some complaints with this dungeon for its complete disregard for *my* feelings, but I was scared of the former dungeon manager right behind me. I kept my grumbling to myself.
The next floor had owls. "Slumber Owl, Lv: 69." Owls were now a popular therapy animal; could I go have a nice sleep with some fluffy feathery owls? They were like adorable moving quilts, right? Unfortunately, I could see them pecking me to death once I went to sleep.
I mean, I hadn't encountered a single monster in this world that would soothe my heart. Or a single monster girl. At this point, if a group of sexy monster girls appeared, squealed, and surrounded me, their smiles alone would definitely kill me. I'd be screwed!
The slumber owls had the skills Motion Sensing and Magic Evasion, so I couldn't attack them from long range. They had the combat skill Feather Cutter, so I expected they'd surround me aerially and then simultaneously cut me down. *I'm starting to think that these aren't therapy owls.*
Strange, because a skill like Floofy Owl Naptime would've been super effective in guaranteeing my death.
They also had the Hypnotism, but I doubted that'd do much against Miss Glare Armor Rep's perfect resistance. Even I had perfect resistance now; hopefully, I'd get some scolding resistance soon! *That skill is gonna get a ton of practice once I get out of this dungeon*, I thought. Now I felt like staying down here in the dungeon all of a sudden…maybe I could earn the skill Kneeling Resistance, too?
The slumber owls swooped down and surrounded us, enormous and not cute at all. *That settles it. They're enemies.* Overhead, the owls stopped in place, then simultaneously blasted their feathers at us. *Aha, Feather Cutter! It's exactly what it sounds like.*

They were floating in place, so I used Airwalk to float above them, took some rocks out of my item bag, and chucked them at the owls. Sheesh. I was saving those meteors for my decisive battle with the nerds! Well, I hadn't set them on fire yet, so these were the not-hot version of meteors. Every time I dug a hole, I saved back the rocks for the purpose of chucking them at the nerds. I did need practice, though, so I chucked the rocks at the owls.

When the slumber owls launched their Feather Cutter attack, they lined up over us in a circle and fired down to the ground, rendering them unable to attack upwards.

I chucked more rocks at them. When I hit one, it fell over, and once it fell over, Miss Glare Armor Rep cut it to bits. Her sword also slashed through the feathers raining down on her as effectively as an umbrella on a rainy day. *No need to buy an umbrella with her around.*

Unfortunately, once you defeat monsters, their weapons disappear. No futon made out of owl feathers for me. More importantly, why was I considering a life as a shut-in here, in a dungeon full of monsters?! How did I still even *have* that title while I was busy exploring a dungeon? The monsters were the ones shut-in! *Please, take that title! I'll give it to you!*

I definitely didn't need it. I wanted to give it away so badly, but no one would take it from me. I guess it would backfire if the shut-in ability protected monsters while they were in the dungeon, but I'd still risk it to give it to them!

We picked up the spellstones and went to peep into the hidden room.

"Ugh, why didn't I use Servitude on an owl and make it sit on my shoulder?! If I had a guardian owl spirit, that'd be cool enough to get made into a movie! Instead, I enslaved the mean girls! There's no movie about that! Any movie about enslaving high school girls is bound to get banned!"

I wish I had an owl spirit. Could I trade in my mean girls for owls? I had five of them.

DAY 32?

Rely too much on cheat skills, and you'll lose sight of how vital fundamental competency is!

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
69TH FLOOR

THE HIDDEN ROOM WAS FAR AWAY. Could I really call it a hidden room when I could see it with my Map skill? It was literally impossible for me to get lost in the so-called mazes. But even so, it was far away!

When we at last reached the stupidly far-off hidden room, we found a gigantic owl…or rather, gigantic owls. No, I did not want these guys as spirit guardians, they'd do much worse than dislocate my shoulder if they tried to stand it on it! I'd be crushed! I'd expect them to snatch me up as prey before getting on my shoulder. And then they'd eat me! I was their prey!

I used Appraisal. "Giant Owl, Lv: 69."

Well, that was a waste of time. What I really wanted to know was how the heck they got into this room in the first place. Their bodies were much bigger than the entrance. Did they grow after getting into the room, and become unable to leave? I didn't see any traps around, either. The room was totally stuffed to the brim with owl!

Miss Glare Armor Rep and I stabbed the immobile owls to death, our expressions completely blank. We couldn't enter until they turned into spellstones.

Now was a good time to take a meal break. Bread and steak!

That makes it sound fancier than it is, I thought; our meal was crackers and dried meat, warmed up over a fire. Villager A's mystery bag was well suited to preserved food, but I had no idea how much I'd stocked. All I had were various preserved foods I bought from the general store. I was sick of them. I was desperate for a proper meal at a restaurant.

Finally, the giant owl corpses vanished and turned into enormous spellstones, plus the hidden room's treasure chest. Which, of course, didn't need a key. Why did those owls take so long to turn into spellstones, anyways?

The treasure chest had boots: "Adhesive Boots: Allows the user to stand on walls and ceilings." Nice! Combined with Airwalk that would be really useful, although whenever I found a seemingly useful item I never got a chance to use it! Seriously! This treasure chest wasn't locked either, so what the hell was I supposed to do with my magic key? I hadn't encountered a single trap since getting the Trap Ring, either. The Adhesive Boots would have no use from here on out, mark my words. They'd get a cameo at best… just like the junk I practiced 'til I bled last volume!

Miss Glare Armor Rep indicated that she didn't need them, so I added the boots into my "Leather Boots?", and tested them out. They felt a little cushier and had a stronger grip…that was the best benefit so far!
That was what made boots great, after all! The real benefit of Adhesive Boots, unveiled!
I tried running around in them. They weren't as good as expensive running shoes but definitely more comfortable than regular sneakers. The cushioning was solid, and the grip outstanding. *It's so easy to get around!*
From a modern-world perspective, the shoes they sold here—leather-soled shoes, or shoes strengthened with a piece of metal on the back side—didn't grip well and were tiring to wear. My favorite part about the Adhesive Boots were the soles. They felt soft and stretchy, like straw.
The Adhesive Boots' selling points are the cushiony insoles and the grip, I thought. I'd buy these in a flash.

I knew better now than to expect to see anything fun when I peeped, but just in case, I took a peep at the 68th floor. Expectations only make the outcome hurt even more. I mean, I peeped at a bunch of *ghouls* from a low angle, for god's sake! That was traumatic! They were literally rotting!
"Acceleration Goat, Lv: 68." Did the 60s have exclusively fluffy monsters?
The goats were getting fluffier as we went, which just made me want to take a nap with them. Sitting among all that fluff and fur… The owls on the last floor invited me to sleep, and now goats were doing it here. Not as fluffy as sheep, but still pretty adorable. Close enough that counting them makes you fall asleep. How many of them were there? *Close to…70?* My eyes started to close…*maybe…more…*
Yowch! I jolted up after a sharp nudge from Miss Glare Armor Rep. That was close! They didn't even have a skill for it and nearly put me to sleep. Dungeons really were dangerous.
I took a closer look. I assumed they accelerated into charge attacks, since they had a resistance to crashing and all; dropping them through a hole wouldn't hurt them. We could try to take them out one by one, but that'd take ages! Besides, going one on one against a level 68 monster still felt too dangerous to handle.
I tried tossing them some paralyzing and poison mushrooms, but they ignored them completely. They appeared to only eat grass. They were also resistant to magic. Their fluffiness must be their shield!
I really didn't want to get into a melee with a bunch of level 68 monsters. I could try to launch a surprise charge attack, but they had crash resistance, so it might not even break their defenses. Chucking rocks wouldn't work either, nor would poison.
I didn't even have enough oil left for a fire attack! What a waste. I wanted to make fried food with that.
They would probably just charge at me head-on, so I could use Airwalk to get above them, float across the floor, and skip to the next floor entirely, but

I couldn't force Miss Glare Armor Rep to fight them all by herself either. She'd probably beat them, to be fair, but I'd be neglecting my duties as her master. *My appeal is in bad enough shape as it is.*
Oh, no—their horns were *drills!* I didn't want them to attack me like that. Wait a second—I knew a girl who had goats like this! In that old anime, Heidi, Girl of the Alps—since when was she packing a herd of murderous acceleration goats?! Heidi was way more terrifying than she looked!
Taking into consideration the fact that they had Crash Resistance but not Slash Resistance, it seemed like a good play to use Airwalk to get overhead and then stab them with swords and spears, but…couldn't they still get me with their freaking *drill horns?!*
So, I opened holes in the ceiling and started stabbing the bleating goats from below. *I seriously overthought things*, the biggest problem was that if I didn't get them in one stab they would accelerate to run off. But that goat wail…the agonized "maaaaah!" Killing monsters was causing me serious psychological damage. Was this another dungeon trap? A psychological trap? I had tears in my eyes! Miss Glare Armor Rep patted me on the back. I was ready to switch places and be her servant instead!
We collected a ton of spellstones in the end.

Next up, 67th floor, at last, one third done, maybe they'd be playing 1/3 Pure Heart Emotion, you know, the *Ruroni no Kenshin* song. My current Pure Heart Emotion was devastating trauma after hearing the agonized death cries of those adorable goats. My appeal had drilled three feet deeper underground, approaching the magma in the Earth's mantle. Was my only hope of finding my sex appeal now for it to spout out in a geyser?
When I opened a hole and peeped through, I saw an "Evil Eye, Lv: 67." That sounded like a deficit of Pure Heart Emotion to me! It was literally evil down to its name.
I assumed it meant the "evil eye," a giant eyeball monster that can curse a person with a glance. Those were pretty popular back in my second year of junior high. The Evil Eye had everything from Enemy Tracking and Sensing to Presence Detection, from Sight Sensing to Danger Detection, not to mention Evil Eye, Spell Eye, Abnormal Status, Instant Kill, and Perfect Magic Resistance—*what the hell, this thing is ridiculous!* There was only one of them, but still, wasn't that unfair?
Goggle…Ogle.
It…looked at me! No, no, no, it realized I was peeping and stared down at me, so our eyes met! Huh, its presence vanished? Hey! Where'd you go, Mr. Evil Eye?
I scampered away, ran as fast as I can, hit max speed, and kicked up air as I sped towards the 67th floor. I was seething with rage. *I'm gonna teach that eye a lesson!* I'd show it! It deserved a beating! I blasted up the stairs and into the room.
Wh—the evil eye had already turned into a spellstone.

“Are you freakin’ kidding me?!” I roared. “It had Instant Kill! It had Evil Eye and Spell Eye and it *looked at me!* Why was the evil eye the one that died?! How is my face more evil than a literal evil eye?! I don’t even have the skill Instant Kill, but it died the moment it saw my face! Are my eyes more evil than a freaking evil-eye monster?! Why does everyone treat me like I’m more dangerous than vicious monsters? Why did it die? I mean, I’m not complaining, but I’m still not satisfied! No way am I more dangerous than actual monsters! Shouldn’t you turn into a protective charm or amulet or something? I thought evil eyes were used to ward away evil, too! But nooo! You died instantly! Do your goddamn job, evil eye! All you did was worsen my mental state! *I’m not the monster, here!* All I did was glare back!” Wailing and whacking the spellstone with my wooden stick, Miss Glare Armor Rep followed me up the stairs to pat me consolingly on the back. Was this dungeon designed purely to insult how I looked? What a crummy thing to do! Was that the sole reason I was summoned here, so my appearance could get dunked on?

DAY 32?

It sounded worse than bullying, but it actually wasn't so bad in context.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
67TH FLOOR

SEE, I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG! Yes, after further thought, I realized my Reflection Cloak that reflects magic attacks back at the user must be to blame, that's why it instantly died, Instant Kill reflected back at it! That had to be why! It wasn't my face or my glare! It was all magic reflection! Right? I didn't have Instant Kill! *What about the imps, then?* Forget the imps! It wasn't my face, it couldn't be. I decreed as much to myself. Incident concluded!

Also, the Evil Eye left behind an item: "Evil Eye." It made as much sense as ever: zero.

In my anger, I tried to smash it, but Miss Armor Rep grabbed my arms and stopped me. She shook her head. It was valuable, I guessed. That made me want to smash it all the more.

I used Appraisal. "Evil Eye: Protective talisman. Guards against all sorts of abnormal conditions. Evil Eye, Spell Eye, Discerning Eye, Wisdom Eye." Earning this from the creature I instakilled didn't fill me with confidence that it'd help me. I kinda wished the Evil Eye could have used it…

Miss Armor Rep grasped the talisman tightly in her hand, then pointed at my eye. What did she mean? Evil Eye…my eye? *I'm the one with an evil eye?!* Another diss? She was meant to be on my side! Turns out she was more than happy to diss me!

No, she shook her head. She meant something different… Was something wrong?

She pointed at the Evil Eye while staring straight at me.

"Uh…Evil Eye?"

She nodded, and then pointed at my eye.

"…My eye?"

She nodded again, and then pointed the Evil Eye at my eye.

"Erm…Evil Eye is my eye… You're saying my face can kill with a glance? See, you *were* insulting me! I'm getting bullied by my own slave!"

Miss Armor Rep stomped her feet. Stomping sure was popular in this world! When I started doing it along with her, she put her head in her hands, apparently in anguish.

She must have be at difficult age. She was eternally 17, after all, so she was stuck in that tricky adolescent period. Being 17 still wasn't easy for her, even living in a fantasy world.

She kept on repeating her gestures, that same insult about the Evil Eye being my eye.
“Are you bullying me? Did you go delinquent? You trying to be a rebellious teenager? Or are you gonna steal a knife, like in those delinquent youth manga? Or a horse? Don’t tell me you’re a horse thief!”
Then we both started stomping our feet again. I was getting pretty good at it, too—maybe it was a side effect from Master of None.
She pointed the Evil Eye at my eye again. What was she trying to say?
“Uh…are you trying to put the Evil Eye into my eye?”
Then she nodded yes. That sounded like an awful fate for my eye.
“You’re saying, if I put this in my eye, something good will happen?”
She nodded forcefully. Such exaggerated gestures! What was she, a mime?
“Oh!” I exclaimed. “It’ll make me look less evil?”
She looked away forcefully…so that wasn’t it. Now she was patting me consolingly on the back again.
Tears streamed down my cheeks. I understood that something good would happen, at least—just not good looks. I’d become the Evil Eye. Huh? Why would I ever want that?! I knew in my heart, though, that Miss Armor Rep would never suggest anything that would hurt me the teeniest, tiniest, most infinitesimal bit.
She must honestly have considered it a good thing. She wouldn’t have tried so hard to force me into it otherwise, and communicating when she couldn’t speak was quite an ordeal.
“Okay, I’m not sure of the specifics, but I get the gist. I’m not sure why, but I’ll put it in my eye. Right? Okey dokey?”
She nodded, and watched me. It was time to put it in.
If, in the worst-case scenario, it destroyed one of my eyes…I might get lucky and have it regenerate. And luck was the one thing I could rely on. I couldn’t ignore Miss Armor Rep’s request after all her effort, so I’d just have to give it a try.
I pushed the Evil Eye into my right eye. Huh? My eye absorbed it. Where’d it go? What happened?
There was nothing in my eye anymore. *Oh!* It compounded with my contact lenses! But I couldn’t use Appraisal on my own contacts, and Appraisal was one of my contacts’ skills, so if I took them out I couldn’t use Appraisal at all.
“How can I check…of course, Status!”

NAME: Haruka
RACE: Human
Lv: 17
JOB: —
HP: 299
MP: 318
VIT: 275

POW: 276
SPE: 316
DEX: 311
MIN: 325
INT: 340
LUK: MAX (Above Limit)
SP: 1108
COMBAT SKILLS: Peerless Cane Mastery Lv5, Avoid Lv3, Magic Infusion LvMax, Life or Death Lv9, Rapid Movement Lv8, Bubble Lv3, Eye Mastery Lv1
MAGIC: Heat Lv8, Teleport Lv4, Gravity Lv3, Holding Lv3, Four Elements Sorcery Lv3, Wood Lv8, Lightning Lv8, Ice Lv7
SKILLS: General Health Lv9, Sensitivity Lv8, Body Manipulation Lv5, Walking Mastery Lv4, Servitude Lv9, Uncover Lv2, Magic Control Lv3, Presence Concealment Lv8, Stealth Lv9, Hiding LvMax, Insentience Lv4, Physical-Proof Lv2, MP Absorption Lv2, Revival Lv1, Supreme Thinking Lv1, Dash Lv8, Airwalk Lv7, Lightspeed Lv9, Jupiter Eye Lv1
TITLES: Shut-In Lv8, NEET Lv8, Loner Lv8, Bane Sorcerer Lv2
ABILITIES: Corporate Proactiveness Lv7, Master of None Lv9, Blockhead Lv9
EQUIPMENT: Wooden Stick?, Clothes Set?, Leather Glove?, Leather Boots?, Cloak?, Jupiter Eye, Ring of the Destitute, Item Bag, Monster Bracelet Power+39% Speed+26%, Vitality+19%, Black Hat

I leveled up! Hang on, that's not important right now—my Contacts turned into a "Jupiter Eye?"
I forgot I could use Appraisal on my Status! "Jupiter Eye: A godly mind's eye that can see all the universe. Future Sight. Spell Eye. Wisdom Eye. Mimicry. Eye Mastery. ?" *That's straight fire!* So what happened to my Ascertainment Lv7, Uncover Lv2, Clairvoyance LvMax, and God's Eye Lv8?
I didn't have Enemy Reveal or Area Analyze or Trap Detection, either! Or Map…or Mimicry?! Did they all combine into Jupiter Eye? *Hm, let's see…*
Well, I could still see the map, and I could still search for enemies. They must have merged into Jupiter Eye somehow. Wasn't it supposed to have Evil Eye, also? I was worried about getting that ability.
So what were the effects of Eye Mastery and Jupiter Eye? If I had mastery of my eyes, surely that meant my face was more attractive now, not less. It was only level 1 now, though.
As looked over my status, Miss Armor Rep walked over with two wooden sticks in hand and held one out for me.
"You want me to take this…wood? The stick?"
She nodded, so I took it from her. Then she took the other wooden stick and held it like a sword. As always, she had a tranquil, beautiful, peerless form

with the blade, an otherworldly glory even stronger than when she had been controlled by the darkness of the bottom floor.
“You wanna fight? A practice fight? Mock fight? Whack fight? You’re saying you wanna smack-off, a so-called duel that’s actually a beating contest?! That’s bullying! You’re bullying me again? No?”
As she responded to everything with a series of positive and negative shakes of the head, it became clear she wanted to do some sort of training. But given the difference in our skill, any so-called training from her would be closer to bullying.
That I fought her and survived on the bottom floor was a miracle. Now that she was out of the darkness, I couldn’t even match up with her. What exactly was she hoping to achieve?
She started whacking me. I couldn’t see our wooden sticks meet, nor her whacks as I dodged them—I saw her phantasmagoric whacks and whaps vanish from my peripheral vision, and then I met her blade.
It was a whacking too fast to see; a myriad of whacks that targeted blind spots and mind spots; a superspeed whacking, invisible to human eye; a barrage of whacking impossible to dodge…whacking, whacking! Also known as *bullying!*
I finally understood what she wanted to tell me—this was the power of Jupiter Eye. This was the splendid power of Eye Mastery and its Future Sight, Spell Eye, Wisdom Eye, and Mimicry.
I could see things that even gods couldn’t. I had no blind spots. Nothing could hide from me.
With Future Sight, I saw her next motions finish before she even began them.
Spell Eye allowed me to see the flow of magic, as well as the path of anything embedded with magic.
Wisdom Eye was pure intel: it granted me a complete understanding of anything I laid my eyes on.
Then Mimicry allowed me to replicate anything I saw. And I could see everything.
What an OP ability! Well, I was getting beat up right now. Still counts! Wait, these cheats were beyond OP, weren’t they? So how was I still getting bullied? And since when did bullying exclusively mean “a beating?!”

What sucked was that the ability was nearly impossible to master. It’d take forever just to get used to it.
Still, once I could see something, I knew I’d be able to handle it within reason. Jupiter Eye would come in handy for sure—that’s why Miss Armor Rep forced me to try it out. My chances of dying had gone down drastically.
Miss Armor Rep must have realized that I was slow to level up too, and worried about me. That was sweet of her. I patted her head to express my thanks and she seemed to enjoy it.

When you think about it, though, she had just beaten the crap out of me with a stick. So why was I patting the head of such a villain?

DAY 32?

Some substances aren't supposed to be combined.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
67TH FLOOR

OUR NEXT DESTINATION was the 66th floor, *I guess there'll be no Pure Heart Emotion for me.* Pure Heart monsters didn't exist in the first place. Anyway, you usually started at the top. The one-third mark would have been the 34th floor, and I doubted we'd see two-thirds Pure Heart Emotion.

I was getting tired. I didn't know how many days had passed, or when it was morning or night. All I knew was that time passed. When would it make sense to take a break?

More so than fighting all the monsters, having to fend off Miss Armor Rep's bullying had suddenly drained me. But monsters in the 60s were still strong, and if I rested here, all of those worrywarts would probably come down after me.

They had the idiots in that group, so they would probably be fine, but then again, they were idiots, so probably not fine at all.

They also had the nerds, but the nerds only ever nerded out even when they were around… *The more I think about it, the less fine this seems!*

The 66th floor had demons…because of the 66, maybe? There were no monster girls on the 77th floor, even though it was double 7s! If there had been monster girls, I might have stayed right there on the 77th floor—and considered putting down roots, too! I'd be making construction renovations to settle down in by now. Talk about an Impure Heart Emotion. Whatever. It was all moot; there hadn't been any monster girls in the first place.

"Demon Blade, Lv: 66." The only demons I encountered so far were the demon swords on the 80th floor. There was a single Demon Swordsmaster, but that alone was pretty terrifying. Talk about a demonic demon. Yes, that demon had ruthlessly attacked my most vulnerable point—my fragile sex appeal! Demonic behavior to a T!

I expected these new monsters to go after the same thing—my sex appeal! Right? Demon blades sounded sick as hell, after all. They looked like small humans but had feathers and could fly, so they were immune to holes. There were about 70 of them…no, 66? Their devilry compelled them to that number, I supposed? I counted again: yep, there were 66.

They had Magic Resistance and Magic Absorption skills, so magic attacks wouldn't work, and they were probably resistant to heat and cold, y'know, being demons and all.

I finished my preparations, and went up to the 66th floor.

"Guuuooouaaa!"

Wailing demonically, the 66 demons charged at me with their swords and spears raised. Some even had shields and halberds! Wielding this wild array of weapons, they rushed towards me all at once…and got caught in my net. Any demon blade that escaped from the net was swiftly cut down by a glaring Miss Armor Rep. And what a satanic glare she had! *Look at the monsters you're fighting, not me!*

My Packing Magic had classed-up into Holding Magic that allowed me not only to wrap up things with magic, but to keep them in place as well. I threw a net at the demon blades with Holding Magic and brought them to the ground, then stabbed them with the minotaur swords and spears that I arranged on the ceiling in advance with more Holding Magic. With a bit more practice, it could become a Sword Rain attack!

"I still can't stab things straight on," I grumbled, "gotta practice more, it's hard to control so many things at once!"

I had only just gotten Holding Magic after all, so I had a long ways to go in terms of controlling the power. This time I needed to carefully arrange everything in advance. But since I could now move large numbers of weapons in advance, I didn't need to worry about having a deficit of workers, which meant I could reduce Miss Armor Rep's workload, too. I decided to focus on practicing Holding Magic.

I was excited now; I could use a bait-and-trap strategy! I mean, the old dude had gone to all this trouble to summon me to a fantasy world, so I may as well try out trapping things with Sword Rain. All I'd demonstrated until now was "beat with stick."

Strategy was one thing, but what I really needed was a better way to make a net. I made this one out of rope and ivy, and it took a while. The rope was thick and hard, and the ivy had thorns that occasionally stabbed me and hurt my hands! Brutal! Miss Armor Rep was much better at net-making than me, somehow. Master of None was apparently useless when it came to net-making. I vowed to buy some nets when I got back to town.

The demon blades left behind spellstones and weapons. What kind and considerate demon blades they were, after all! *Hey, is their sex appeal higher than mine?!*

Adding those to the weapons I took from the minotaurs and the war puppets, I now had a massive mountain. I was grateful. Now I could do Sword Rain, which would totally look sick if I pulled it off. *Thanks, demon blades.*

I had another issue to deal with now: the group of presences I senses. I previously had Presence Detection, which classed up into Presence Sensing. When I focused in a direction now, I could figure out what was there. It was the 65th floor, so it should have been a boss. Why was it a whole group?

I peeped upstairs to see a group of level 65 murder tarantulas. A bunch of plain old spiders…was that it? Wasn't there a boss every five floors? That's how it'd been since floor 70.

The nerds had told me what was on everything from the 1st to 46th floors in that report I forced them to write.
In their report, there were no bosses, so the first one was probably on the 50th floor. Then there was one every ten floors, until the 75th floor, and then there was one every five floors.
Starting at the 75th floor, all of the bosses had been level 100, too. So I was pretty certain that there wasn't another boss on the 55th floor…but this was all conjecture. Did that report turn out to be totally useless? It was hard enough to get from the 1st floor to the 46th! If I was going to fall, why not include that in the report?! All I saw was the first half of the 1st floor! *I'll barrage them with a Stick Rain attack!*
While planning my revenge on the nerds, I started to smoke out the 65th floor. This was practically a staple move of mine, but I was starting to worry about my tinder supply…how come I still had an endless supply of poison mushrooms?
"Next up is floor 64! I feel like we've gone up pretty far… Kinda far. A smidge?"
Grumbling to myself, I stabbed the spiders and collected the spellstones. I noticed we'd had a drought of glares recently. *Do your job, Miss Glare Armor Rep! Don't give up on me!* She was stabbing the spiders and collecting their spellstones for me, but she skipped the most important part! The glare!
The 64th floor had level 64 Blade Armadillos. Armadillos are famous for their armored backsides. But these ones had blades sticking out of their backs, so when they rolled at you, they would tear you apart! They had long, sharp claws on their front legs, probably originally for digging holes, but no way did I want to get scratched by those. Regular armadillos could repel pistol bullets, and these were monstrous upgrades of those animals. Physical attacks had no chance of working.
Most concerningly, I'd never heard anything about an armadillo's weak point! As far as I remembered, they were kinda like anteaters. I'd never heard of an anteater's weak point, either. I didn't have many chances to run into anteaters in the real world, y'know?
What?! Why did they also have Magic Reflection and Physical Reflection? Spin Attack and Charge, too? I couldn't fight these things! I might be able to find and attack a crevice in an armadillo's armor if it was alone, but there were about fifty to sixty of them rolling around up there! I'd have no chance in a face-to-face battle! Why was every floor literally impossible?!
I knew that they ate insects and worms, but I may as well try giving them the paralysis and poison mushrooms… *Okay, I guess they're eating them.* Apparently, they were omnivores. I thought armadillos in the real world were herbivores, but as long as they ate the mushrooms, I wouldn't complain. It seemed like it'd take a while for the mushrooms to take effect, so I'd take a rest before going to get the spellstones.

I set up my tent, and asked Miss Armor Rep to take watch while I took a nap.
I still heard them rolling around upstairs, but I couldn't afford to pay it any notice. Just like I couldn't afford to pay any more notice to my sex appeal. Though that matter was doomed way before I paid it any attention at all.

Ughhh. How long did I sleep for, three hours? My head felt clear, a little sluggish, but nothing to complain about, especially as Miss Armor Rep kept watch without any sleep or rest the entire time. *I guess skeletons don't sleep, so it's no problem for her?*
The monsters really had stopped regenerating for good; I didn't sense any below. They must have stopped regenerating after Miss Armor Rep quit her job as dungeon emperor, and apparently, she had no successors. She was a one-woman emperor. Did the dungeons here have a severe talent shortage? The monsters did kill any person who went that far down.
We picked up the spellstones on the 64th floor. The hidden room was devoid of traps, in typical fashion, and the treasure chest had no lock. A giant armadillo stood inside, so I mashed the poison mushrooms into pulp, daubed my wooden staff in the mixture, then stabbed it repeatedly. This one was bigger than the entrance as well. *How did it get in here in the first place?*
The treasure chest was covered in poison mushrooms when I was done. *There's no chance in hell a chest like that has my sex appeal!*
I opened it up. "Prometheus Chains: Binding. Perfect Skill Invincibility." Chains, huh? Chains by themselves wouldn't hurt me, appeal-wise. I could use them to capture monsters.
I tried combining the chains with that item I kept sealed deep in my bag, "Submission Choker: A necklaces that forces the wearer into submission." *Oh, no, together they paint me as a total criminal!*
A sinful, criminal combination, 100 percent. Just owning them would bring about a guilty verdict! Even worse, the accused, yours truly, had already enslaved five high school girls and a sixth self-proclaimed 17-year-old skeleton. I had no viable defense. Any reasonable defense lawyer would leap of the courtroom at the speed of sound, never to be seen again…just like my sex appeal.
I was caught in an ingenious, inescapable trap. Oh, sweet sex appeal, we're in for it now.

I sealed the chains in my item bag with the choker. So long as I never took that set out, maybe I'd be forgiven for my crimes…though, wasn't Prometheus restrained by his chains in a normal way? Nothing kinky involved? He wasn't the one who used them, was he? Why not call this the Andromeda Chain, then? She got chained up, too, *and* she was a beautiful woman! Chains from an old geezer and chains from a hot babe hold drastically different value to a high school boy.

DAY 34

Greeting him with laughter or lectures—they're the same, essentially, but also totally different.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
56TH FLOOR

IT TOOK US A LONG TIME to beat the spike buffalo on the 55th floor and the metal snails on the 56th, and now we were stuck. We were only 10 floors past the farthest point that Oda-kun and his friends had advanced to.

It had been close to a week since Haruka-kun fell down the dungeon. In five days, we'd only gone 10 floors.

Normally, we could leave the dungeon and come back through the gates to the furthest floor that we cleared. But the dungeon was dying, so the gates stopped working after the 46th floor. It would take a while if we wanted to go back to town to replenish, and if we left, we weren't sure that even the gate to the 46th floor would still work. Maybe none of the gates worked anymore.

We wouldn't have to fight monsters, but it would take ages just to walk up and down. And we only had food for ten days.

We'd be out of food in two or three days, at this rate. We were exhausted, approaching our limit. We had to decide between forging ahead, returning as a group, or sending some people back up to get supplies…

"I say we go back once we run out of food. The gate on the 46th floor should still work, and there are no monsters between here and there. We should be able to go to town and back in one day."

"It's dangerous to send one group to get supplies and leave the rest to handle the 57th floor on their own. If there's anything there like those spike buffalo, we'd need the group's full numbers, or we'd have no chance."

I agreed that splitting up would be dangerous. The spike buffalo broke through our vanguard and scattered us, where it became a brutal fight. We wanted to coax them through our diagonal formation and then strike from behind—but they could kick from behind, too. How were we supposed to know that cows could kick with their rear legs? There were no farms around for us to go cow-spotting! So infiltrated us, sent us into chaos, then chased us around until we had to retreat. We had to regroup in the end, so it took a whole extra day to finish them off.

Next up were the metal snails: steel-armored snails, completely resistant to physical attacks. We switched over to magic attacks but ran out of MP. We continued fighting with all our might while eating MP mushrooms but still couldn't beat them. So long as we stayed away, we didn't sustain damage either, but since their shells reflected magic attacks back at us, it took us ages and who-knows how much MP to beat them.

By the time we finished, it was already late at night. Tomorrow, we'd storm the 57th floor. We hadn't scouted it out yet, but we needed rest. Mushrooms technically restored HP and MP faster, but they didn't touch mental exhaustion.
The cyclops, the werewolves, and then the spike buffalo—each battle was getting more dangerous for the vanguard. They needed to rest.
We would scout things out tomorrow, and depending on the next enemy, we might go back town once. After all our hard work—despite everyone pushing themselves to the limit—we had only gone ten floors down, to the 56th floor. Haruka-kun was probably at least 40 floors deeper. Assuming the rumors were true and that there were 100 floors, we had a great distance yet to go. Especially given how the monsters on every floor are stronger than the last.
"Everyone, rest up for the rest of the day," I called. "Tomorrow, we'll sleep in, then scout out the next floor. If it seems too dangerous, we'll go back to town at once."
Everyone nodded in agreement, but no one responded. They didn't want to say it out loud.
"Rear guard, you eat first, and then everyone get to sleep."
"Okay," they called.
Everyone moved haltingly, racked by exhaustion. Realistically, we should go back now. I was sure that everyone recognized that. We would likely reach our limit tomorrow, and anything beyond that was unfeasible. Getting here had already worn us to the bone, and the next monsters would be the strongest we had ever faced.
One hundred floors…he had survived the 100th floor for a week, by himself. He must be even more exhausted than all of us, more ragged, more injured. At his absolute limit.
Forget his limit—it was a miracle that he was still alive, and he had gone far beyond that. But if we started to think along those lines, we wouldn't be able to turn back anymore.
Haruka-kun faced dangers beyond our comprehension. Shimazaki-san and her friends leveled up more today—how much experience was he gaining? Every time they leveled up, they looked ready to burst into tears. If they were gaining that much experience, imagine what kind of insane monsters Haruka-kun was facing, and in what kind of massive numbers, all alone, at his low level, with his fragile body.
He had to be stretched beyond any reasonable limit. The word "dangerous" was an understatement to express the hell he was going through. He fought through it, all alone, even so…to get back to all of us.
The 100th floor alone should have taken forever for him to beat, and that was with extensive preparations and careful planning.
We had to fall back for now.
He was still here. We still had a life that we needed to protect.

Haruka-kun had sacrificed his life to protect us, and that was precisely why we couldn’t afford to lose a single person! Not even on our way to protect him in return!
If things got out of hand, we would retreat. In our current state of exhaustion, anything was possible. Even if it made us take longer to go down the dungeon, we wouldn’t lose a single person.
Otherwise, Haruka-kun will definitely get mad, and I’ll no longer be able to look him in the eye.
We needed to meet him with laughter and smiles. Every last one of us.

DAY 34?

Members of a tribe are defenseless alone.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
64TH FLOOR

WE PICKED UP THE SPELLSTONES from the armadillos and proceeded smoothly to the 63rd floor.

The next floor had level 63 reflect snails. Snails? Giant slugs? We no longer needed any strategy here.Incidentally, I suffered some serious mental trauma from excitedly peeping through the hole in the ceiling, only to see massive slugs. *I'm sick of this dungeon!*

The snails had perfect defenses: Magic Reflection, Physical Reflection, Weapon Shatter, Dissolve, Bite…which meant it was salt-sprinkling time! As if I was going to fight those sorts of insane monsters head on! It was a given that I'd use salt!

Magic Reflection, Physical Reflection, and Weapon Shatter resided in their shells, so I hurled rocks at the shells to draw out the heads. The head, however, was where their Bite abilities were—*since when can snails bite anyways?! Do they even have teeth?* If I poked my finger in to check, it might get dissolved, so I wasn't about to find out.

After I drew them out with some rock-chucking, I sprinkled the salt. *How many tons of salt does Villager A have?!* Truly, this was a mystery wrapped in an enigma. The item bag was one thing, but I mostly meant Villager A himself.

Finished. An easy victory.

When I attacked their heads, they hid inside of their shells, so I stuffed the openings with salt. After they dried out, all that was left was to roast them. Not very smart, those snails.

Asides from their shells, they were weaklings. Snails were nothing without their armor.

Now they were salted escargot, or salt-fried snails. I vowed to force them down the nerds' throats as soon as I got the chance.

I dashed to peep up at the 62nd floor. No fun to be had there either.

The 62nd floor was full of level 62 skeleton knights, fully equipped with armor and shields, plus swords, shields, and bows, too. I opened a hole and sent them falling. The fall broke their bones and sent them scattering everywhere. *Take care, skeletons!* I suppose they were already dead… because they were literally skeletons?

The skeletons fortunate enough not to fall through the hole were instantly mowed down by the blade of Miss Glare Armor Rep, a former skeleton herself. That was some harsh treatment of her former employees!

The monsters really are getting easier as we go up now, I thought. They're lower-level, so it makes sense. I couldn't beat them head-on, though, so there wasn't any point in comparing.

We picked up all the spellstones. I opened a hole in the ceiling and saw fierce, massive metal giants. I used Appraisal: "Iron Golem, Lv: 61." Then I took a peep. *It's been a while, golems.* These ones were metal, the first we'd encountered since the anti-magic golems. I was honestly worried that the whole dungeon might collapse from the weight if I sent them falling down, and I didn't want to cause any difficulties for the former dungeon CEO here. They weren't anti-magic this time, so they must have specialized in physical resistance. That meant magic would probably work. They had Physical Resistance, Slash Resistance, and Herculean Strength…only three skills? Their stats were over 600, even so, and they had insane vitality and power, but they had nowhere near as many skills as the monsters on the lower floors. No crash resistance, either! I seriously considered opening a hole in the ceiling, but since they didn't have magic resistance I stood a chance of getting past them with a frontal attack.

I went up to the 61st floor, dug a hole in the ground—no, not to make them fall. They couldn't jump or anything, so the holes would impede their movement. There was no way I'd get around their giant metal frames otherwise.

They trudged toward me, making the earth tremor with each step. But since the ground was full of holes, and as slow-footed as they were, they couldn't advance. So I had them stopped in place, all packed together. *Please don't fall through the ground!*

I had picked up the "Elder Ent Staff: Increases magic power and magic control. MP 50% bonus. Attribute bonus (large)" before, so my magic power should have been considerably raised. My level was higher, too—my intelligence had increased 1.5 times compared to level 12, all the way to 340—so my magic should have been enough to stop them.

Now's the time for the real Flame Whorl, I thought, *no Hair Whorl today!* It was an awesome-looking attack, so long as I wasn't using it to turn old dudes hideously bald.

I combined Heat Magic and Ice Magic to instantly freeze them in place, then launched a fierce combination of Fire and Heat Magic to heat them up to scorching temperatures. I walked up to the ceiling using my Adhesion Boots, then fired off blazing lava rocks like bullets at the frozen snails.

That was a worthy Fire and Ice Whorl! I wouldn't be hearing any complaints from the skill any time soon. Maybe I'd even get a stamp of approval from Master Whorl! Chucking those rocks felt seriously good. I did already exhaust half my supply for the nerds, but boy, was it worth it.

But really, all I did was put heat pressure on the metal. Cooling and rapidly heating metals to and from an ultra-low temperature causes fatigue and the metal to fracture. Now my only job was to chuck rocks at the weak points. I wouldn't have been able to defeat them so easily without that scientific knowledge. It would've taken a ridiculous amount of magic otherwise! But that's how I caused a magnificent explosion of fire, ice, and steam. It looked like insane magic powers from the outside!
My local platinum-armored skeleton, meanwhile, seemed entranced by the flagrant glow of the explosion on her white armor. See? Appearances were all that mattered to her! Superficial to the end!
That explosion might have changed her impression of me a bit. I hadn't fought an enemy straight on a single time so far, much less conjured any showy magic.
The iron golems exploded into spellstones. The stones weren't iron, though? Weird.

Our mood greatly improved, we moved to the next floor up: the 60th floor, a boss. Once every 10 floors made more sense. I mean, wasn't once every five floors way too often? With level 100 monsters, too! This dungeon was insane! If anyone knew what was really in this dungeon, not a single person would try to raid it! *We're in an impossible game, I swear.*

The 60th floor had a giant ceiling and a giant monster to match it. It had to be at least 30 feet tall. "Anti-Magic Gigants, Lv: 60." Huh? Gigants?
"That's the plural form," I said. "It should be a Gigant if there's just one of them. I don't know who gave you this name, but they deserve a lecture—mind if I lecture your parents? It's pretty embarrassing to have a plural name."
"Gaaaaaahhhh!" It roared.
Did I just OHKO it? The whole point of a Gigant*s* is that there's a whole tribe of them, not just a single one. It did have a power stat of 814 and was jacked as all hell, but it was the perfect height to easily stab it in its Achilles' heel. "Whoa, there!"
"Groooooahhhh!"
I had unlimited swipes at its shin, too.
"Done yet?"
"Guuugrraaaahhhhhh!"
It crumpled to the ground. Now I had a good angle at the place where no male of any tribe would want to be stabbed, no matter how big they were. I started to chuck some rocks.
"How about this?"
"…Raaaaaaaaaggruuuuugraaaaaiiiiiieeee!"
It screamed like its head was splitting apart, a wail of agony so loud it made the whole floor tremble. Screaming in pain, it fainted. Miss Armor Rep slit its throat the moment it toppled to the ground.

Didn’t he realize that it was dangerous for a member of a giant tribe to come out without the rest of their family? Members of a tribe are fragile alone. It had Magic-Proof, but without proper equipment it stood no chance! It was wearing nothing but furs. I felt a little insulted. It was so easy to aim for its huge, blatant weak points. It should have known better than to come to a narrow, flat dungeon. *Dungeons aren’t suited for giants,* I thought. Thank god.

Yep, there it was, my first glare in a while. Miss Glare Armor Rep felt the need to top up her glare quota right about now.

But I didn’t mind getting glared at anymore. That wail was the worst thing I’d ever heard from a male from any tribe, a tragic, pitiful cry, even remembering it was painful! Miss Glare Armor Rep probably saw the agonized expression on its face from straight on, whereas I could only imagine how pathetic and pained it must have looked. I vowed to look for a Crotch Invincibility item the moment I got back to town.

That Gigants totally ruined the mood with all of its screaming, and it didn’t even leave behind a crotch-protecting item. Instead, I got this: “Herculean Strength Clothes: Vitality bonus (large). Power 50% bonus. Indestructible fist.” Something for hand-to-hand combat?

I met eyes with Miss Glare Armor Rep only for her to shake her head no. *She really does only care about appearances!* She must not have liked the Gigants’ clothes because they were nothing but a giant set of furs. It gave nice bonuses to vitality and power, though, so I added it into my “Clothes Set?” to be safe.

Unfortunately, I had no interest in hand-to-hand combat, even with an “indestructible fist.” No, I much preferred one-sided beatings. How dare that Gigants not take my preferences into account? No tact.

I grabbed the spellstones. Above us lay the 59th floor. Finally, the 50s! I had no idea how many days had passed to get here.

Knowing my classmates, they could probably get to the 50s themselves. The nerds already made it all the way to floor 46, hadn’t they? So, as long as the boss on the 50th floor wasn’t too tough, they should be fine… I bet they were much stronger now, plus they had cheat skills and the numbers advantage. The monsters here were way weaker than the ones below. This would be a piece of cake for them! To be fair, no matter how much relatively weaker they were, I would still be a goner if I went against any level 50+ monster.

I suspected, though, that when I met up with everyone, they were going to get mad at me. Only one scene came to mind when I closed my eyes and pictured our reunion: a lecture!

I came to this dungeon in the first place to find my sex appeal and thus *avoid* getting lectured, so why did I feel like my appeal was even lower than before? Was this the true trap of the dungeon?

Now I felt like the former dungeon CEO was glaring at me, too.

DAY 35?

I shouldn't have made the meatheads meet up with me, they're contagious.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
60TH FLOOR

PRESENCE DETECTION, which helped me make it this far, had been promoted into Presence Sensing. At first, it was useful because it notified me when something was vaguely in my proximity. When it leveled up, its range extended first, then I could seek out presences in certain directions, and eventually I could figure out what specifically lay in the direction I was searching. It saved me countless times; enough that I wanted to throw it a promotion party. I could narrow its field to look even further away and more precisely wherever I wanted. It was an endlessly useful skill. I could use it to become a master fisherman if I wanted to.

Right now, I sensed something above.

Something bad—horrifyingly, shockingly bad, so stunningly bad that I almost laughed. It was like thunder on a clear day.

But for now, on the 59th floor, I had to deal with some doggos. "Hellhound, Lv: 59." *Sniff vinegar and perish!*

I fired a series of vinegar balls at their noses, accelerated, then flew through the gaps between the titanic dogs. Behind me, the writhing dogs' heads flew off in a twinkling flash of platinum armor.

We hurried straight ahead to the 58th floor. We slashed through the group of level 58 frogmen without a care. All that croaking was totally obnoxious! We didn't have time for that!

As expected of frog people, they wielded tridents. They surrounded us before leaping in to stab us all at once—but too bad, they were way out of their league.

I would've died for sure if they came at us with those tridents in a single, vicious blow, but their attack didn't have enough *oomph* to it. It was nothing compared to the grueling training this terrifying White Armor Skeleton put me through—absolutely nothing.

No matter how many times they stabbed their dozens of tridents in our direction, their jabs were unbearably sluggish.

Life or death—if there was any crevice at all, I could slip into it, stab, and retreat. Y*ou're too slow, frogmen!*

The Platinum Armor Lady took the stage after that, so they were screwed, every last one of them. I left the rest to her.

Instant death brought by a hundred white flowers, white blades, all dancing.

Now we were looking at a floor of frog corpses, while that ugly presence clamored further above. It was a familiar presence. One that had collapsed,

shed blood, sustained injury, dragged allies along after it. A presence that bore its friends on its backs. That presence fought, struggled, persisted, even after getting beaten up and torn apart like old rags.
What are you doing this far down, you stupid meatheads?!
It wasn't just the meatheads—the rest of them were there, too! They were *way* in over their heads! This was the 57th freaking floor! Had they all gone as brainless as the meatheads? I was amazed they were still alive!
Upstairs on the 57th floor, wounded from head to foot, bloodied from front to back, and in danger of losing their minds—everyone was waiting for me.
I didn't mean to make them wait so long. There wasn't a moment to lose.

I sprang up the stairs and checked things out with Jupiter Eye.
A deformed, bizarre being lay ahead: "Sphinx, Lv: 100." It had Magic-Proof, Physical-Proof, and even Immortality. *Oh, they are* boned*!*
Huh? There were also four hidden rooms on the floor. Oh, that made sense…the floor was probably a puzzle where you gathered all four items to defeat the Sphinx. You could never win against this enemy in a straight-up fight.
There was no time to go to the hidden rooms! One of my classmates could die at any moment—they were barely hanging on.
I can't believe they came to the 57th floor, I thought. I could have guessed the 50th, which was why I hurried…but they had been even more reckless than I expected.
Aaaah, just get to it! For now, I had to get rid of this annoying-ass riddle monster. If you want an answer to your damn riddle, go ask someone else!

The monster itself was a riddle. Magic-Proof, Physical-Proof, and Immortality skills to top it off? The solution was simple. I'd just make myself Physical-proof, and then use Certain Kill to overcome Immortality!
I do feel bad that you never had chance to shine until now, you useless item. I had used the left gauntlet all along, but the right one…
I'd been waiting to do some *hiyah!* with my right gauntlet. It seemed like the item was destined to be useless until now, but at long last, my right Spearshield Gauntlet would stand in the spotlight. Get to work, Sir Spearshield Gauntlets…get to work, Sir Nullifies Physical and Magic Defense! *I need you, at last!*
I used Airwalk to dash into the air, launched myself at the Sphinx at full speed, and stabbed it with all my might—using the *right* Spearshield Gauntlet, of course.
Physical-proof, huh? Not today, Sphinx! I was Physical-proof-proof! Now I would use Certain Kill to rid it of its immortal status.
"Angelica-san, your turn now!"
A godly glitter of white danced down from the sky in a sustained flash.

I gripped my staff tight with my right hand and stabbed it down into the Sphinx. As Miss Platinum Armor landed her blow, I used the gauntlet to nullify its defense.

Although it was level 100, it was still a mid-tier manager of the 57th floor. If the dungeon CEO decided to cut it loose, so be it. Certain death!

She chopped the immortal Sphinx's head clean off, dismissing the Sphinx from its duty. It was a demise that only a true goddess of death could administer. The Sphinx—worshipped by many as a god itself—was an ordinary monster, with no special significance to a glittering, platinum-armored sword goddess.

Now to clean up the rest of the floor.

"Can you kill some of those mummy dudes? Don't worry, I'll incinerate the rest of them."

Angelica nodded, standing before where my classmates, each on the verge of death, held the front line; stunning them with her reverent, terrifying platinum-armored beauty. Time itself froze with fear, as everyone stopped to breathlessly admire this font of true immortality. The bloodstained battlefield was engulfed in a brutal silence.

It's burning time.

DAY 35

They get mad at me when I don't fight properly, then neg me when I do.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
56TH FLOOR

WE HEARD THE RECONNAISSANCE about the 57th floor and held a meeting. We initially intended to fall back, but since the 57th floor only had a large group of mummies, we assumed we had a simple war of attrition on our hands. If we got exhausted, we could always come back another time, so we may as well try to exterminate the mummies—that's what we all agreed. There would be no next time, not for the 57th floor of the ultimate dungeon. This was our last fight. The end of the show.

"The mummies are level 57, and there are a lot of them, but they're all power. Mummies are slow and frail," declared Oda-kun before we descended.

"So it's a matter of time!"

"We just need to whittle them down. They won't respawn anymore, so let's try to defeat as many as we can."

"They have the ability Underworld; make sure to use Holy or Fire Magic."

"Got it!"

According to what the nerds told us, it was a simple numbers game. Before we got bogged down in a war of attrition, we'd swoop in, defeat as many as we could, and retreat. They were strong but clumsy and slow, and frail enough to down in one hit. There only real strength was their numbers. After we hit a mummy once, we could exorcise it with Holy Magic and finish it off with Inferno Magic, a higher level of Fire Magic. Easy stuff.

It would take a while, but we were all fully aware of it. We fought all the more aggressively, mowing down mummies.

They were no match for us. We scattered them, crushed them, blew them away. Only a bit further until the 58th floor, we thought—and then, it began. A purple light flashed. The ground trembled…and the mummies we killed began to wriggle and revive.

There were too many of them to fight. They cut off our path of retreat. The only way for us to go was down. Further down wasn't safe either, but we were goners for sure if we tried to break through the enormous herd of mummies. There was no strategizing to be done about it.

We fled to the next floor. Maybe we'd regret it later, but we had no choice! The floor was filled with an endless sea of mummies, constantly replenishing themselves and intercepting us. Our swords shattered, our magic ran out, our shields broke, our spears fell, we spent the last of our arrows—and now, we had no way to fight them anymore.

We couldn't stop them. We couldn't shake them off. We could only run.
We were well in over our heads. People were injured; we were out of magic and usable equipment, low on medicine, depleted stamina, and almost out of willpower, too.
The exit to the 58th floor had a stairwell before it, and there, our only hope shattered. Our only escape was blocked. Despair overwhelmed us.
In front of the exit stood a god, a statue that would never let us pass: it bore the head of pharaoh in a Nemes headdress and the body of a mighty lion. This creature guarded kings and even gods; it was a gigantic lion-human chimera, a level 100 Sphinx.
We couldn't even consider how to fight it, let alone how to defeat it. Something like that—humans couldn't fight it. But we had no place to run.
When the Sphinx's pupils flashed violet, the decaying bodies of the mummies revived in an instant. That was the power of Underworld.
Our Holy Magic no longer worked. No matter how many times we mowed the mummies down, blasted them apart, killed them, they'd get revived by Underworld in an eternal loop of death and rebirth.
Slice, whack, punch, burn, pierce, crush, stab…and yet the mummies rose again to attack us anew. The Underworld skill was the cruelest we'd faced yet.
The Sphinx was the guardian of holy temples. Body of a lion, head of a king. A sacred being. And a ruthless monster.
We collapsed, one after another. Far from being in fighting shape, most of us could no longer even move.
The mummies closed in on us. We had no way to win. I prayed for a single person to escape, someone, anyone, *please.* I'd sacrifice myself to open up an escape if I had to. I had to split the formation, cut through, make *something*, anything happen…*the slightest gap, the smallest opening…!* I pleaded and prayed.
My wishes went unanswered.
Right as the fear of death kindled within me, cloaking my body and mind, I saw a knight in white armor swoop down from the sky.
In a refined, beautiful slash, the knight beheaded the Sphinx, the monster made of fury and evil incarnate. It was over.
Now *that* was someone without an equal on the battlefield. Fighting that knight would be impossible. More dangerous than death. Demons themselves would kneel before that knight, because that knight was a Dungeon King. It had to be. Before us stood one of those supreme lords of gods and demons, a being that ruled all.
Unbeatable, unstoppable. Trespassing on its very shadow was forbidden.
I had to do something. I had to try. I'd defend my classmates to my last death. Even if I could only hold it off for a fraction of a second…just like Haruka-kun did for us, again and again.
Before I had time to act on the thought, the glittering white light descended and landed on the battlefield. The hell of raging slaughter stood frozen in

time. The whole floor trembled before the knight's presence; the flow of time halted, as did the inevitable cycle of death and rebirth. All that remained was the stillness of death.
Then over the Sphinx's corpse, countless brilliant lights enfolded the heavens. In a blink they burst outward, a fury of storming flames that obliterated all of the life around us.
In that merciless instant, the sky burned savagely, beautifully, unlike anything I had ever seen.
Behind it, a black form, the incarnation of death itself, paused. And in its conceit, its face broke into a smile.

So I smiled and grumbled, "Welcome back… You took your sweet time, didn't you? We all got tired of waiting, you know?"
Time moved again. Like a brutal storm, the downpouring of bright light surrounded everyone in piercing arrows of pure radiance that scorched the monsters to dust. The light blasted them apart, burned them, and then shattered them.
An overwhelming massacre. The epitome of violence, a savage slaughter.
On the verge of death, it was a starry sky of light that I glimpsed out of the corner of my eyes. A meteoric shower of flames that slaughtered our despair.
"I'm back…kinda? Hey, what do you mean I'm late? Like, what day even is it, y'know?"
The shadow of death wavered. The person we had all been waiting for—hoping for—had destroyed our inevitable deaths altogether.
"I'll finish them off—the rest of you, get out of here," he said.
He took a step forward. Then he leapt into the field of mummies and, in a raging dance, killed them. Killed, slaughtered, exterminated, obliterated, massacred. He taught the immortal monsters what death truly meant.
Jet-black danced alongside the glimmering white. Leaping, dashing, whirling, raging, wildly dancing; a mad dance in flight. Around them was death, pure ruin, as they cast aside and destroyed the lives of immortal monsters.
He defeated our despair. He slaughtered our sorrow. He turned away death from our doors. He would, and did, beat death itself, whether or not you believed it were possible.
Like he always did.
"It's been a hot sec, am I right? So…what day is it?"

He came back. Like he always did.
Welcome back, Haruka-kun.
We really did get tired of waiting for you.

DAY 36

Those sayings from old wise men have actual meanings, you know.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
56TH FLOOR

WHEN HARUKA-KUN FINISHED healing everyone, he immediately fell over and went straight to sleep. The armored knight stood on guard, as if protecting him.
The knight had an atmosphere that warned me off from trying to say anything. I would have to thank her after Haruka-kun woke up.
Most of us were badly injured, so many of us collapsed into sleep as well. No one had the energy to move or speak. My mind similarly exhausted, I passed out.

When I woke up, it was just like always, as if this was just any other ordinary day: Haruka-kun had prepared breakfast. And just like always, as if this were an ordinary day from back when we stayed in his cave, he was grumbling about how there were too many mushrooms. He sounded way too casual about this.
Everyone sept heavily due to their aches and pains, but the smell of cooking woke us up. Then, as we chowed down breakfast, we started attacking Haruka-kun with questions.
Our backs were against the wall. We hadn't realized that we were caught in a trap. Without any escape and no way to fight, we came face to face with our own end.
But Haruka-kun could explain. Apparently, he had the skill "Area Analyze?"
"Uh, 'cause this floor is a big puzzle…kinda…thing. There are four hidden rooms, you get the items out of them, and you pass? Y'know?"
So that was why we couldn't pass. I had wondered why the monsters were literally unbeatable; if you didn't realize there was a puzzle, you'd get caught in a death trap. But Haruka-kun hadn't gathered the puzzle items either, had he?
"Didn't you kill it? How?"
"Nah, you can't kill the mummies or the Sphinx either. The Sphinx had Magic-Proof, Physical-Proof, and Immortalities, so it can't die, and as long as the Sphinx is alive, the mummies are kept alive by Underworld. It's, uh, pretty impossible."
Huh? You couldn't kill them? He literally killed a demonic monster that was not only immune to physical and magical attacks but also *immortal?!*
"So *how did you kill it?!"* everyone shouted.

“That’s what I’m saying… C’mon, guys! Y’know that old wise man saying? ‘You can kill anything if you try.’ Good advice, right?”
We’d heard something like that, of course. People said that all the time. Only the saying was *you can* do *anything if you try,* not *kill*. It wasn’t about murdering people! How had he warped that phrase into something so criminal?!
“No one says that!” everyone shouted. “Is that some sort of murderous saying from a samurai videogame?!”
What a terrifying mistake. That was no wise man’s proverb. Rather, this was a whole new brand of crazy person sayings. More of a *con*verb than a *pro*verb.
“What’s the problem? That’s… That’s the saying, isn’t it? If you try, you can…well, y’know the rest…?”
Everyone sighed.
What kind of wise man tried to solve all of his problems by killing people? If all wise people were that terrifying, human race would have gone extinct long ago! That single wise man would’ve brought about the end of humanity!
I bowed in the direction of the shining, white-armored knight. Her intense nobility nearly took my breath away.
“Th-thank you, brave knight, for saving us,” I stuttered.
“Thank you!” the rest of the class chimed in.
Silently and gracefully, she returned the bow. I couldn’t describe it… standing there, it felt like her mere existence was in a separate world from the rest of us.
“Uh, Haruka-kun?” I said. “Aren’t you going to introduce us to her?”
“Ohhh. Yeah, it’s, y’know, the dungeon emperor. Well, I guess she’s the former one?”
Well, that made sense. A dungeon emperor would logically be so ridiculously overpowered that it would— *What?!*
“Why is the dungeon emperor with you?!” everyone screamed.
No wonder her presence was overwhelming! It made as much sense as that Sphinx, the one that induced an overpowering sensation of fear and awe in us, being able to crush us like mites. And the Sphinx was only the boss of the 57th floor! To the dungeon emperor before us now, a floor boss was like dirt on its shoes.
“Uh…so it saved us before, but are we…dead now?”
Everyone’s faces spasmed with a mixture of laughter and tears. Its intimidating, magnificent existence and the destruction it portended were awe-inspiring. This was it. The dungeon master. The legendary lord of the ultimate dungeon, the supreme being.
“Hang on, hang on, it’s not that, I wouldn’t bring the dungeon emperor up here, would I? Use common sense! I…well, I kinda enslaved her…is the thing…?”

“*Why did you enslave the dungeon emperor?* There’s no way you could get away with enslaving someone like that! She’s one of the most important beings in this world!”
I couldn’t stand it anymore. What in the name of all that is good was he *doing*?!
Oh, don’t worry, this was only the dungeon emperor, the ruler of the ultimate dungeon. The supreme being that ruled over all of the monsters in this world, you know—that dungeon emperor. Is that what he meant by “former?” Did the dungeon emperor abandon her post? And then Haruka-kun enslaved her and brought her here?!
If that was the case…still, at least Haruka-kun was here, if he hadn’t come we would have all died, but… However I envisioned the events leading up to now, it seemed impossible for Haruka-kun to have made it here.
In just one week, he came up from the bottom floor: the 100th floor. That was 43 floors in one week. There was no way he could have done it. It should have been a completely hopeless situation; no one could survive on the 100th floor.
And yet standing next to him was the supreme ruler of all dungeons? The dungeon emperor?
If the dungeon emperor was on his side, then it would be no problem, I supposed. That was how he made it through the ultimate dungeon. Up through the lower layers, overflowing with the most evil, powerful monsters, he had crushed them with the strongest of all monsters at his side…
That was how he saved us: With the ultimate powers of the emperor of the ultimate dungeon, by using the ultimate in ridiculous logic and enslaving her.

DAY 37

It was really hard walking all the way up here from the 100th floor! No one understands my plight.

THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON

WE WENT BACK. All we had to do was walk over to the gate.

No one understood how any of it was possible.

Everyone was shocked that he had survived.

Everyone was grateful for that same fact.

We all expressed our gratitude and appreciation to Haruka-kun.

Haruka-kun shocked us and scared us, so we lectured him. What he had gone through was beyond the limits of our imagination. It wasn't just irrational, it was rooms, galaxies, universes away from that concept. And of course, in the aftermath, he acted as only Haruka-kun could. He gave us a story that no one else could ever think up. *I mean…*

"You're not tired at all! You barely fought in the first place!" we shouted at him.

Haruka-kun, who we had assumed was desperately fighting for his life in a maze of merciless dungeon floors, was in fact acting as thoughtlessly, selfishly, and foolishly as ever.

The person we assumed to be suffering, mortally wounded on the dungeon's bottom floor, falling apart from endless battles, struggling to go upstairs by himself, fighting for his survival at every stage…hadn't suffered a single wound, refused to fight battles altogether, and in fact took pains to avoid said battles, one-sidedly slaughtered endless monsters, and came back to us like he always did.

His biggest takeaway was "there was a lot of stairs, that was hard." Oh, poor little Haruka-kun, you climbed 43 flights of stairs? You must've been sooo tired!

We didn't need to worry about him! Like every other day, all he needed to do was set some traps, engage in some deception, spread confusion, and then slaughter the monsters and climb up all the stairs. The sole complaint he had from his journey to the 100th floor of the Ultimate Dungeon…was climbing up the damn stairs!

"I couldn't win if I actually *fought* them!" Haruka-kun protested. "No way! It was a group of level 99 minotaurs and a level 100 Living Armor, for god's sake! No way! I can't beat that! I'd die!"

So since he couldn't beat them, he killed them. Death by falling, apparently. The culprit was a hardened criminal who refused to even reflect on his crimes!

"In order to beat the cyclops, we had to tactically go after all the weak points—the Achilles' Heel, the shin, the crotch…and you killed them in one swoop?!" shouted Oda-kun.

“We thought the werewolves were the strongest monsters imaginable…and you used vinegar? And they covered their noses and started whimpering?” screamed Shimazaki-san.
“Gross! I totally hate salt-fried snail! And those snails were, like, not meant for cooking!” cried Vice Rep B.
“After how terrifying those bulls were… After how hard we fought… Death by falling? By *falling*?! It wasn’t a damn accident!!” wailed Fukunuki-san. “That’s animal cruelty! Cow slaughterer!”
The greatest mystery was how he managed to kill the immortal Sphinx. It literally shouldn’t be able to die!
“You were Physical-proof-proof? Then you could kill it with Certain Kill? That doesn’t make any sense!”
The pandemonium only grew more cacophonous as we heard more explanations. We fell deeper into confusion, bafflement, bewilderment. Meanwhile, the dungeon emperor did nothing but interject with little nods of agreement.
Overwhelmed by surprise, shock, confusion, and frustration, we eventually gave up. Even the dungeon emperor seemed stunned at how, apparently, he truly was the epitome of ridiculousness. *She must be a good person.*
He was to blame, here. Your actions stunned a dungeon emperor, Haruka-kun! That makes *you* the inhuman one.

He didn’t give the bosses any chance to show their strength. The fearsome monsters ended up being the ones exterminated in the blink of an eye. Their toughness, their bulk, their strength, all rendered useless as he ruthlessly hunted and killed. He slaughtered them all in cold blood.
It hardly counted as “fighting” by any definition.
Those monsters were marked for dead before they even began the fight. Their deaths were set in stone before they even encountered Haruka-kun. They were too strong for him to fight, so he killed them instead. He had no intentions of fighting, so there was no way for him to lose. He was invincible. Unstoppable. Brutal.
Meanwhile, the dungeon emperor was untouchable in another sense of the word. Unstoppable in a different way: physically invincible.
No wonder he couldn’t lose. He never even tried to fight. He just killed everything in his way. The slaughterer simply slaughtered his way back to us. *He* was unbeatable in the ugliest possible meaning of the word—because there was no fight to beat him in! Almost all of the monsters died without knowing who the enemy was, or even that there was one in the first place. The battles never even begun from their perspective.
This wasn’t worth an empty search for his so-called sex appeal! Not at all! From our perspective—people whose lives he had saved—Haruka-kun was far worse than the dungeon monsters; a devilish demon who committed more cruel and evil and brutal deeds than any beast, who exhausted all the

possibilities for doing evil in the entire universe. I was amazed that the dungeon emperor could tolerate him!
But then again, that was how he survived.
That was how he came back to us. So that made it all fine…I guess?

DAY 37
MORNING
There's a problem with the question. No matter how I answer it, it becomes my fault!
THE ULTIMATE DUNGEON
OUTSIDE

AT LAST, back outside the dungeon on the first floor…entrance, or exit, whichever it was, the bright sunlight was dazzling to my eyes after they'd adjusted to the dark dungeon. I couldn't see my classmates' faces, but I was sure they were all smiling.

It was dawn, the beginning of a new day. Finally, a day with all of us, together.

"We're out! We escaped! I bet it's an illusion, someone pinch me!"

We were out of the dungeon for the first time in a week. Haruka-kun seemed happy about it…but nothing about this was an illusion! It was the result of hard work. It was hardly an escape either, but rather a ruthless, unabating slaughtering monsters… He had diligently, laboriously, scrupulously, and thoroughly slaughtered every single monster, on every single floor, on his way up here! By what metric did that count as an escape?! And since when was this stairwell so chic?!

There was a throng of people outside the dungeon too. They looked over at us in surprise: it was the Adventurers' Guild and a group of adventurers, plus the receptionists and the guild master. There was also a pile of goods and supplies lined up outside.

Did they come because they were worried about us? Guild Master Hakiess pushed his way through the crowd toward us.

"Is everyone okay?" he asked. "I brought healers as well. How many are injured?"

Then, surprised to see Haruka-kun, Hakiess turned to him.

"Is that you, Haruka? Didn't you fall down to the bottom floor? Are you okay?"

"Huh? Oh, I'm fine, 'cause I came back up, yeah? If I didn't, I wouldn't be okay? Right?"

Guild Master Hakiess looked confused. He took things seriously, so he was actually attempting to understand Haruka-kun…which he stood no chance of ever doing, so he was always confused. He didn't know there was no point in trying to understand Haruka-kun. When someone was as incomprehensible as Haruka-kun, it stood to reason that any words that came out of his mouth would be just as incomprehensible, so Hakiess couldn't deduce the obvious snark behind Haruka-kun's answer.

All of the adventurers who came to save us now had their attention on Haruka-kun, unable to understand what happened. Paying attention certainly wouldn't help them. We asked him to explain before and had understood the major points of his explanation, but we were no closer to understanding Haruka-kun himself! He remained a mystery, as ever. Something inside Haruka-kun automatically rejected common sense. If he did accidentally use common sense, his head might explode from the contradiction.

Explanations were moot at this point. Even if someone understood what had transpired, they would never understand the underlying logic.

"Uh, hi again? I mean…for the first time? I mean, why is everyone looking at me?!"

When the adventurers realized it was Haruka-kun, they desperately looked away from him. Some of them craned their necks so far that it looked painful. *Oof, those are some ugly crunching sounds…* Everyone seemed terrified to make eye contact with him.

"They're ignoring me," Haruka-kun whined, "this is bullying, this is the cold shoulder, bullying the outsider! They're excluding me, ostracizing me, ostrich-ing me…(and so on, and so forth…)"

Haruka-kun kept complaining. I didn't know where ostriches came into it, but why bother asking? As I said, he was truly incomprehensible.

We exchanged information with the adventurers and got updated on the circumstances. The report nearly brought us to tears: in order to assist us, the guild was building a base camp deep down inside of the dungeon. While we were fighting the monsters, they were bringing down supplies to set up camp deep in the dungeon. That's why everyone had gathered here; they came to help us.

And yet the person who caused all the trouble in the first place was still complaining, "Pit viper! Mongoose!" and so on and so forth. Nothing I could do about that. Was he capable of doing anything other than complaining?

I was left to try to explain what happened, or at least so much as I understood. There was no way any of the adventurers understood what we told them. We didn't understand our own explanation either. And the most inexplicable thing of all was the guy who caused all of it to happen in the first place.

I explained everything that I could: that the dungeon had died, that all the monsters were dead, that everyone was safe—and that the dungeon wouldn't revive anymore.

Without the dungeon emperor, none of the monsters could come back. I decided not to mention that the dungeon emperor herself happened to be standing right next to me, as if she had no idea what we were talking about. I mean, they weren't about to let the dungeon emperor stay at an inn and go shopping around town, right? I felt sure, for some reason, that if I told the poster girl, "Hey, this is the dungeon emperor!" she'd burst into tears and start doing a weird dance again.

I suspected the gatekeepers would bar us from the town altogether if they knew, and if anyone said anything rude about the dungeon emperor, Haruka-kun would definitely exact revenge on them. Keeping my mouth shut was definitely the best way to preserve everyone's happiness.
Besides, the person who enslaved the emperor was the real dangerous one! The dungeon emperor seemed to be a regular, good person. The person who enslaved her, though? He was a dangerous monster masquerading as a human!
So as we made our way back to town, I gave my version of events, explained what I could, and threw in just a dash of white lies.
Everyone scratched their heads in confusion, looking unsure whether to believe me or be happy about the end results. I was relieved they didn't accept what had happened without resistance. Thank goodness there was no one else as twisted as Haruka-kun in this world.
The town came into view. It felt almost comforting to see it.
Simply being with Haruka-kun again made everything feel like home. I realized how much I missed our beloved inn, too…well, except for its weird name.
In front of the town gates, armed soldiers were lined up. They seemed to be preparing for something.
"That's Lord Omui's rescue party for Haruka," Guild Master Hakiess explained. "Let me go talk to them." He ran over to them to discuss the matter. He was taking things seriously.
Everyone in town was worried about Haruka-kun, and about all of us. They tried their best to help us, even though we were at best strangers to them, if not newcomers, or even intruders.
Though I supposed only one of us was causing any trouble. That troublemaker had ended up enslaving who we had assumed was the biggest troublemaker of all. Or maybe "troublemaker" wasn't fair… Maybe she was more like a calamity. Could there really be a calamity out there that surpassed Haruka-kun?

DAY 37

Lords are tough to deal with! They're always jumping and stomping their feet.

OMUI CITY
CITY GATES

THE DUKE SUMMONED Haruka-kun to give his version of events. It took a lot of guts to hear out a full explanation from him. Especially since he already knew the gist of what happened…and had yet to see the results for himself. Incredibly bold, that duke.

Naturally, this resulted in a mass panic where we were all practically clawing at our heads in second-hand embarrassment.

They chose the wrong person. They had no chance at figuring out what was going on by asking him. He was who caused all this confusion in the first place!

I watched from afar. At first, the duke's daughter jumped about a lot…and now she was stomping her feet? Haruka-kun started stomping his feet, too. Wow, he was pretty good at it.

They eventually let him go. He walked over toward us with a tired expression…but he didn't look nearly as tired as the duke's daughter. She was on the verge of collapsing, and I didn't blame her one bit. Haruka-kun had a nerve, looking so exhausted! He was the perpetrator here! He caused this chaos in the first place!

We passed through the gates at long last and walked back to town. All of us, as a group, with Haruka-kun in tow. We would let it stay a secret that our extra member was the dungeon emperor. That was best for everyone.

In a sense, the town was safest now that the dungeon emperor was also protecting it. Not from monsters, but from the dangerous, ever-nonsensical existence of its master and enslaver. The dungeon emperor would surely keep him at bay for us.

The town was bustling, per usual. The streets filled with activity and laughter. The dungeon emperor looked around everywhere. *I guess she isn't used to city life, since she's used to life on the 100th floor of the Ultimate Dungeon.* It must have been strange. Or maybe it reminded her of happier times? She seemed to be enjoying town, that was what mattered. That must be why Haruka-kun brought her here from the 100th floor. It made absolutely no sense on the one hand, but it was the right thing to do, and at least no one seemed to mind.

Oda-kun and his group split off to visit the armory, doing whatever they pleased, as always. Apparently, they were concerned about their safety, as they were seeking fireproof and inferno-proof helmets. I didn't think a

helmet would be much of a match for Haruka-kun’s Physical-proof-proof, but decided to stay quiet.
It was like any other day, or like every average day. We had returned to our regular old status quo…our days of laughter alongside Haruka-kun.

DAY 37
LUNCH
◆
THE WHITE LOSER INN

WHEN WE GOT BACK TO THE INN, the poster girl began headbutting Haruka-kun out of joy. With her arms spread, she charged in and headbutted him, like a bull—and she was grinning the whole time!

Oda-kun and his friends returned empty-handed, unable to find fireproof equipment to protect themselves from Haruka-kun. We all laughed and consoled them.

Then we all ate lunch in the inn together; shouting, laughing, messing around. We were bone-tired even then. Our equipment was in tatters, and each of us was in terrible shape, but everyone was smiling nonetheless.

We took turns taking baths before returning to the dining hall, where a brand-new, gorgeous mound of weapons sparkled on the dining table.

“I kinda picked this stuff up?” Haruka-kun said, gesturing. “So I’m…giving them away, I guess. Each person can take two weapons and two pieces of armor, and then two of whatever else you want, so six things total. First come, first serve. Go ahead, take ’em, already! If you want?”

The dining hall instantly turned into a vicious battlefield, one boiling with desire, greed, and craving. It was like watching a bunch of grandmothers at a discount market. The boys were swiftly ejected from the fray, and the maidens ruled supreme.

These were one-of-a-kind goods—bargains of a lifetime, limited-time offers like none other! This was an insane, violent consignment-clearance sale!

The dining hall had become a battlefield cursed by a war god. This was a place where value-crazed war goddesses alone would gather, a utopia overflowing with legendary bargains!

“If you want more than six items, I’ll sell them to whoever makes an offer first…” Haruka-kun said. “They’re cheap, though, I’m telling ya. I kinda picked it all up on my way back, so like, no big deal.”

He said that intending to stop us, to calm things down, but he made a big mistake uttering that to a group of maidens. With that one line, he instantly destroyed the barely there, ever-so-ephemeral reason of every girl in our class. Everyone forgot themselves in a hubbub of fighting and snatching for items; now we were locked in a bout of squirming and grabbing, stealing, taking, and scrambling. We all forgot we were even friends. It was the perfect picture of a bloodbath.

Screaming at the top of our lungs, desperately defending our chosen prizes, howling mad war cries as we stole and snatched, everyone struggled across the battlefield to advance to the cash register known as Haruka-kun.

It was all-out war between a group of girls that had done nothing but polish their fighting skills since coming to this world.
It was kinda fun. The boys were all left trembling, for some reason.
Now that everyone had unequally and unfairly gotten their weapons distributed from Haruka-kun, the calm gradually returned. We all boasted about our spoils after that, with some of the girls even rubbing their new weapons against their cheeks.
“I feel like I’m ten again with this fire sword!”
“Even my spare weapons have skills now! What a luxury.”
“How did you get so many? Not fair!!”
“I’m so happy, I can’t even get mad about it.”
Everyone was overjoyed at their big catches, the fruits of their labors. And why wouldn’t they be? Every single weapon was incredibly powerful with a plethora of top-notch skills. Legendary materials, ultra-rare skills, top-class armor. Everyone stared spellbound at their new equipment, cheeks flushed with happiness.
This was Haruka-kun’s own thank-you, his own way of expressing his appreciation to us. This way, he was compensating us for what we lost.
Haruka-kun was more awkward than the rest of us put together, but he had no need for any of these things—so he could use them to show his gratitude.
He didn’t need to give us anything, though. A lot of our weapons broke in the maze, but we collected more than enough spellstones from our own battles to come away with a profit. Since he gave us these gifts, though, we took them and purchased extras to our heart’s content without one iota of restraint. Everyone got at least ten items, and a lot of girls ended up with over twenty.
Those were premium top-class goods at bargain prices, so precious that we had no hope of getting our hands on them even if we were rich. If they had been for sale, they’d be so in-demand that we’d have no chance to grab one!
And that went for every last one of Haruka-kun’s spoils.
They were the insanely powerful weapons and ridiculous equipment wielded by the monsters that Haruka-kun exterminated, and that was why he’d gathered so many and was giving them away.
Everyone was a little bit stronger, now, and a little bit safer.
Some girls had already equipped their new items; some were using Appraisal, rapt with fascination; others were itching with impatience to test out the effects. They were all bursting with renewed energy.
I had bought so many items that I’d put myself in a bit of a pickle, money-wise. It would be best to keep it secret that I borrowed a *tiny* bit of the money I confiscated from Haruka-kun…since I could definitely to pay him back tomorrow, once we turned in the spellstones! It was a temporary loan, promise!
I had never gotten anything so precious for myself before, and I assumed the same was true for everyone else.
The dining hall filled with laughter. Smiling faces were all around me.

DAY 37

All I did was exchange my money in town and take what they owed me, but now I'm being slandered!

OMUI CITY
THE DUKE'S PALACE

IT TOOK A WHOLE WEEK to prepare, but unfortunately, it was too little too late. It took a long time to summon and organize the soldiers.

Everyone was nervous about potentially weakening the city's defenses. We discussed thoroughly whether or not to use ordinary adventurers as our defensive force; everyone said that if he really fell to the bottom floor of the Ultimate Dungeon, he was long dead.

All obvious points. What they didn't realize, though, was that something had happened in Omui. I alone knew about it. That's why I had to rescue him.

You see, a single boy had saved the entire royal family of Omui.

He was willing to sacrifice himself to save me, so I had to do the same to return the favor. I owed him that much.

This boy was our benefactor, and thus the benefactor of the generational rulers of this land. Just as we gathered our army and supplies and prepared to go out to save him, however, the Adventurers' Guild, who had gone ahead of us to try to help, returned.

I trembled then, as the worst-case scenario crossed my mind—that he had died before I could pay him back for how he saved us. Before I could do anything.

But he returned. And what a return it was—he was victorious, having killed the dungeon emperor. He granted yet another of our dearest wishes. An unfamiliar boy, in an unfamiliar place, had single-handedly brought about a miracle.

Our subsequent meetings were repetitive, meaningless. Why still bother holding meetings at all? We knew what happened, and now our duty was to accept it. Meetings were thoroughly unnecessary.

"Surely it is a good thing that the dungeon emperor has been killed?"

With that conclusion, our meeting finally ended. Every one of my subordinates was confused, but they recognized it as a good thing that future potential disasters had been eliminated. It was the only conclusion we could reach.

This was an unprecedented blessing for our city. The merchants bought a monumental load of spellstones from the Adventurers' Guild. Our ordinary little general store and armory sold goods that could typically only be

purchased from major dealers. Our poor, trifling domain known for naught but mushrooms was now full of powerful weapons.
Our city was the target of a monster stampede but hadn't suffered a single casualty. Far from it! Instead, we received a windfall of spellstones and equipment. Our city became rich.
Every day, traders from all over the kingdom gathered and sent money raining down on us. Business was booming and still growing.
Our most dangerous frontier had, in the course of a few days, transformed into an incredible and profitable resource. We could never have dreamed that our domain would go through such a rapid spurt of economic development. Everyone was thrilled.
So was I, of course. But I knew what was really happening.
The forest was known as a wicked place, a tangle of death that regularly spawned groups of monsters. It launched stampedes that destroyed entire cities. The number of monsters was falling—rumor had it that the monster kings were dying out, leading to fewer monsters in general. Regardless, we no longer had to worry about stampedes for the time being.
Then there was the legendary dungeon near our city, known by many names including "The Ultimate Dungeon." Should a stampede emerge from within its depths, it wouldn't just destroy our city and dukedom, but the entire kingdom. Its monsters were that powerful; many within were said to have grown to the maximum level 100. Up until now, the best we could hope for was to reduce their numbers even by a little. Now, that dungeon was dead.
Our city became wealthy that same day, and before we knew it, peace reigned. As leaders, we did nothing, but our town became a wonderful place even so. It was no wonder that, lacking any hint as to what caused all of this, all of my advisers were confused.

I was confused, too. But I knew one thing for sure.
I knew what caused this unprecedented prosperity.
I knew why our forests were safe now.
I knew why we survived the stampede.
And I knew who killed the Ultimate Dungeon, too.
I knew the sole cause.
It was that dark-haired, dark-eyed foreign boy who saved my life and the lives of my family. As well as his companions.
A group of thirty visitors came to our town, and they had brought all of this about.
We, the rulers of this city, did nothing. No matter how much we struggled and fought, we could never stop tragedy from striking again. All Omui had been before was a dangerous, poor domain.
Our people likely hadn't realized that we'd been born anew. Before now, tragedy struck at our town again and again—it was our duty to end it. As rulers of this domain, we existed to save our people. We would risk it all just for one citizen if we could.

We were a seawall for the kingdom, which was little more than an abandoned town. That gave us all the more reason to bring even a scrap of fleeting happiness to our people. We wanted to curb the expansion of the forest in what little way we could, in hopes of delaying the forecasted flood from the dungeon for a moment. But even if we could stave off the inevitable, our town was doomed. I ached to protect my people all the same.
Then all of a sudden, all of our problems were solved. Our town and domain became peaceful and wealthy. Life had been so brutal until this point that we'd grown used to living in a land deprived of hope.
Now the spellstones and weapons sold in our town were valuable enough to attract merchants from all over the world. How did we attain such items, and so many of them?
The answer was simple: *he* killed that many monsters.
The monster stampede was halted before it reached our town, and now the forest lay tranquil. The dungeon was destroyed. Our city prospered in its wake.
The reason for that was simple, too. All threats to our domain had turned into sources of revenue. Deadly monsters transformed into high-grade goods. Our town was now both peaceful and wealthy all at once.
The peace and security of our people had been something we couldn't even wish for in our wildest dreams, but our city was full of smiling faces and endless laughter. Everyone was happy, and that happiness continued every day.
The happiness that was once so inconceivable for our people flowed through our town like a river. Our ancestors who died in the forest had waited and prayed for this day for years upon years.
And yet, no one really *got* it.
Life was good. The shops were full of customers, the shops full of goods. Life was easier. Things were only bound to get better from here—I knew everyone felt that way.
But people couldn't appreciate that we were truly born again, that we were saved, just yet. It would take time.
Our city had basically become the center of the kingdom's wealth. Huge investments began to circulate and enrich the entire domain. Nothing threatened to steal away our happiness. Our poor, struggle-torn town had turned into a rich, peaceful one before anyone had time to realize. The residents who were beset by tragedy now had cause to rejoice.
The person behind it all didn't dress up his deeds, and he wouldn't tell if you didn't ask. That was why nobody knew the true story of how our tragic town became a city of smiles.
Our ancestors gave up their lives to protect our city from countless calamities. They protected us, dreaming of a better future that never came. And those sacrifices did nothing to stem the calamities befalling our town. It marched onwards towards tragedy, uncaring of the lives of its citizens

falling by the wayside. All it could expect was further misery…and then one day, seemingly out of nowhere, it became happy.
That’s why everyone is confused, dumbfounded. We only ever knew sadness. This was the first miracle we’ve ever seen.
I was…glad. That’s all I could feel. It was the same for all of us.

DAY 37
EVENING
I don’t think you can use recovery mushrooms on patients recovering from mushroom addiction.
OMUI CITY

CASH ACQUIRED! Yes, cash, stolen from the girls!
I took their every last penny. They were probably destitute now.
They were thrilled that I was selling items too valuable to show up on the market, and for so cheap. But to my eyes, I was clearing out excess inventory. I could try to sell them, but they were too valuable for anyone to buy at market rate. And say someone did buy them, the level requirement was way too high for anyone to equip. I kept the best items for myself and turned the remainder into a bargain sale. They were still profitable for me even at such a deep discount.
I was rich as rich could be! I drained them all! I drained them all once more—bow before me, peasants!
What a perfect method I’d used to loosen their purse strings, make them compete against each other, and destroy all economic reason in the process! It worked to perfection, and now all of their cash belonged to me!
If the guild wouldn’t cough up good money for my weapons or spellstones, I’d extort them from my classmates. They were the wealthiest people in this domain. And it sure was easy to figure out exactly how much they had!
I was surprised Class Rep had so much money. *She must be pretty thrifty to save up so much.* Not that it mattered—it all went into my pockets in the end. What was she planning to do with all of those weapons and all that gear?
I’d escaped any lectures with a weapons-armor-and-gear bargain sale. I slipped through an opening, the tightest gap in the universe! It was probably thanks to Life or Death that I got off lecture-free.
But I wasn’t in the clear yet. Oh, no way. They weren’t likely to forget those false accusations they’d made—meaning there was no guarantee they wouldn’t get mad at me for no reason again! I hadn’t disproved any of their charges!
It was my duty to clear my own name. I would bring about it myself—justice, truth, and the liberation of the wrongfully accused!
“Dried fruits, please!” I called. “And a lot of them! I’ll buy everything you have!”
There were more food stands and merchants in town nowadays. I’d buy up all the dried fruit this city had!
Miss Armor Rep accompanied me on the trip. She was a girl, so I guessed she liked shopping…? She refrained from my bargain sale, though I wasn’t

sure why. The vicious bargain-sale bloodbath waged by those demonic battle maidens must have been terrifying enough to send even a dungeon master running away in tears.
She was native to this world, so it was probably her first experience with a bargain sale, too.
Even the nerds, who loved weapon and equipment more than anything, couldn't break through the wall of girls. They could only look on at the goods, unable to touch anything as they were kicked, trampled, and disposed of like tattered rags to rot on the floor. That Sphinx would have been a piece of cake if they could get through that frothing wall of maidens.

The general store had expanded, too, both in terms of physical size and products available. Maybe there'd be some good stuff now! Dried fruits were my first priority.
"Hi, there, it's been a while," said the general store lady. "I heard you got lost in the maze! I was worried about you. Well, I wasn't that worried, I knew you'd be okay, so…everything's fine?"
She was unusually normal. I guess she had managed to break free from her mushroom addiction? She was actually doing her job.
"A while? I don't actually know what day it is, and no one will tell me either… Anyways, I came to buy some things, and it looks like you have new stuff on sale! I can pay in either cash…or mushrooms? Oh, and I'll buy all the dried fruit you have!"
The general store lady immediately started gasping and sobbing. She must be defective. Wow, mushroom addiction left some serious after-effects! Maybe she had no hope of ever fully recovering, seeing how she got hooked on recovery mushrooms.
She gave a strained gasp. Heaving wildly, she gripped my hands. Time stopped.
"Hahuuuhahhuuhahhuuhahhuu!"
We signed the contract. We made the deal. A massive load of mushrooms to settle my bill at the store, as well as the money she had.
Time to shop! Miss Armor Rep and I took a look around the store. She didn't have any possessions, but surely she needed daily necessities and a change of clothes, for one. What in the world did a skeleton need on a daily basis, though?
She looked to be having fun looking around, regardless, and I gave her a ton of pocket money to spend however she wanted. It was probably her first shopping trip in a while, so why not?
"Is that all you want? I'm not gonna notice if you buy a ton of stuff—see how much money there is? No big deal. The trick is to think about it after you buy it!"
Miss Armor Rep may have been the dungeon emperor, but apparently, she wasn't a big spender. We'd already refurnished our supplies and bought a

bunch of stuff on the way here, so we had technically done our fair share of big spending. I swore to be a good shopping role model for her.
With all these new goods available, we could replenish on oil and spices. I could get new netting, too, and I bought up all the dried fruit and sugar available. There, that was more than enough to make me a big spender. I wasn't buying stuff that I needed, I *needed* stuff to buy!
Miss Armor Rep had her arms crammed full of things she bought. She was seemingly holding back even now, eyeing more products with a mournful gaze.
Covered in armor though she was, it was obvious she was having a good time. They really didn't have any shopping spots down at the bottom of the ultimate dungeon, so she deserved to enjoy herself now! She spent an infinitely long time trapped doing nothing, and she was 17 the whole damn time. That's a long time to be a teenager!
Lastly, I went to sell some weapons to the club specialty store. His store had expanded, too, but unfortunately, I knew not to expect much from the product lineup. Nothing but clubs lined the shelves, as always.
The moment I showed him some of the spare metal weapons I picked up from the dungeon, he immediately shoved all the money he had at me with aggressive force. *These are just the extra weapons that nobody else wanted from my bargain sale, but okay?*
"Those are all dungeon weapons! And from the lower floors, ain't they? With first-rate skills, too?! And special effects! Wh-wh-what are these weapons?!"
I thought he was totally engrossed in clubs, but now he was freaking out over metal weapons. I guess he overreacted this much about everything.
I only brought the cheapest possible items along with me, and this was already shaping up to be rough. I took all the money he had for the time being. The armory man groaned as he stared at the weapons. Every time I tried to sell him something, I got the same result.
Unfortunately, while Miss Armor Rep appeared to enjoy shopping, she had no interest in clubs. She could hardly buy better weapons up here than what she already had. She was draped in the finest possible equipment, the strongest and most valuable cheat items this world had ever seen. She herself was a cheat code to rival her equipment!
Meanwhile, her master had a wooden stick and shady black hood. The difference in our appearances was really pushing it!
I stopped by the Adventurers' Guild next, hoping to pick up my next installment of the payment for my spellstones. I donated the worst-quality weapons and equipment that no one wanted to receive for free, much less buy, to the Adventurers' Guild. They didn't have any more money from paying for all the spellstones, so I donated them at no cost.
They went to all the trouble of preparing a rescue mission for me, y'know? All the adventurers gathered and all that. Giving them the leftover annoying items might come in handy.
Finally, it was time to go back to the inn.

DAY 37
NIGHT
◆
THE WHITE LOSER INN
DINING HALL

THE ATMOSPHERE of a battlefield had filled the dining hall. Battle formations were already drawn up.
The scent of war drifted across the street where it could be keenly felt outside the inn.
They had formed a perfect encirclement. There was no escape.
If I entered without any countermeasures, I would lose my chance to bolt immediately.
They had a perfect attack formation. They laid in wait, ready to strike, ready to surround and capture.
Yeah, there was no mistaking what was up. They were in formation to lecture me!
Fortunately, I had countermeasures; and a perfectly planned, secret countermeasure at that. Their formation meant nothing!
“I’m back—with onigiri! Pass ‘em around, eat your fill, go on!”
“Is that…rice?”
“Rice balls?!”
“Onigiri!”
Presented with the allure of onigiri rice balls, they were powerless. I was invincible! I destroyed their lecture formation in one perfect move, toppled their mighty wall, and now they couldn’t reform it.
I ate some onigiri myself as I rolled the rice into balls, and boy, was it delicious. It was a little dry, but rice was rice. Everyone stuffed their faces with onigiri in turn, shedding tears all the while.
Another win for rice. At long last, I had rice! It was all thanks to the general store lady. Rice was enough to break my most persistent enemies.
“I’ve got fried onigiri comin’ up too! Just go ahead, grab some! Race you for it?”
“Fried onigiri! Gimme!”
This was long-grain rice, so it wasn’t nearly as sweet or sticky as Japanese rice. But it was still rice! I pledged to make fried rice tomorrow.
Everyone’s mouths were too full to even speak, let alone lecture. I thoroughly neutralized their lecture capacity. Soon, everyone was too full to move either, which was the final nail in the coffin for their lecture formation. They wobbled and collapsed, huge grins on their faces.

The best thing was that couldn’t even get mad at me. They were no more than happy girls with stuffed bellies, and they looked overjoyed as they toppled to the ground.

DAY 37
NIGHT
You gobbled up the cake I made before, though? Marie Antoinette's got nothing on you!
THE WHITE LOSER INN

"THAT WAS DELICIOUS!"
"It was delicious, but where did Haruka-kun get off to?"
Yep. We held a perfect formation to get him to talk to us, and he defeated it in one fell swoop.
We hadn't had rice in over a month, and this was our first onigiri in all that time. We all wept from the flavors and the nostalgia of a food we had eaten every single day just one month prior, and had assumed we'd never see again. He found it for us.
Haruka-kun had made yet another killing somehow, furnishing the local general store and armory with supplies and resources to reap ever-greater profits from the entire country. I thought the town had gotten livelier, but what actually happened is that it fell under his economic control. *He never misses a beat!*
Today, I understood one reason he had for doing all of this: rice. He got his hands on rice and brought it back for all of us, and even made onigiri, though we would've helped him find it if he told us his plan. He was so determined to surprise us that he made enough for 30 people ahead of time. We weren't the slightest bit mad at him anymore. Instead, we were all smiling.
To be honest, if Haruka-kun hadn't been ascending the dungeon at the right moment, we would have all died. We would only have had our own lapse in judgment to blame.
At the same time, we couldn't sit and wait for him. He was only level 12—a weakling! He kept saying himself, he'd easily die in one hit. He was the last person that should be fighting anyway, and here he was, all alone, stuck in inconceivably dangerous battles.
It was a given that we would rescue him. He should have waited for us…but instead, he came up, ignoring all danger, as if he were on a pleasant jaunt through a field. Despite the many risks to his very life. I knew he had to be lying when he said everything was totally fine.
I knew he took risks and nearly lost his life dozens, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of times. He wouldn't have leveled up otherwise. Growing five levels, all the way up to level 17? That was a significant leap. He didn't level up after exterminating the entire stampede of monsters in the forest, but jumped up five levels there—that guaranteed that he put himself in

danger. He refused to stay still and to wait for us to rescue him, and chose instead to stroll up through the dungeon.
Most of us were on the verge of death when he appeared on the 56th floor. We all must have seen his fearless dive into the sea of mummies. We saw him act as a wall between them and us, chopping them up, tearing them apart, and refusing to let them reach us.
His actions there had nothing to do with skills or leveling up. That strength was acquired from putting his own life on the line, time after countless time. He could never have defeated those mummies if he hadn't been through so many cycles of life-threatening situations. I knew then that he'd been through hell.
We lined up to try to talk to him about those tribulations. Instead, we got onigiri.
The rice balls were delicious. We were delighted to have them, and they made us smile. We were so happy that we couldn't hold back our tears—but we needed to tell Haruka-kun not to risk his life like that. He protected us, yet again, and brought us happiness beyond words. Yet again, we failed to thank him for it.
"I was ready to lecture him, even with my mouth full of onigiri!" said Shimazaki-san. "But I didn't expect that 'If they don't have onigiri, let them eat *fried* onigiri' Marie maneuver, not in my wildest dreams! We might have managed to resist the onigiri somehow, but fried onigiri put him way over the top!"
"And with soy sauce!" everyone shouted. "Totally unfair!"
We all lost our urge to lecture him, broken by the sight of him handing out onigiri.
It didn't change reality, though. He was strong enough to ignore it, but stats and levels were the most important factors in this world. Haruka-kun put himself in such dangerous situations despite his stats hovering around a mere 300. His HP barely hit that 300 mark; his vitality was even less than that. He made his way through the dungeon, even so. He shouldn't have been able to survive!
He had always been so weak that he'd die instantly if he exchanged proper blows with any of the monsters. That's why he became so quick and reliant on specialized magic. He had no choice but to dodge: if he got hit, he'd die. That's why he fought the way he did, and why he ended up even more frail and vulnerable to direct hits then if he fought normally. His low HP and vitality stemmed from that, and that was why we couldn't let him fight. I'd had enough of putting him in danger.
He had a warped strength. That's what Oda-kun and his friends called him. He was strong, but in a brash, blunt way.
He tried to help us, but was the weakest of us all in truth. He didn't get by on stats or skills, but with his own kind of strength—a mix of speed and skill derived from his weakness, and evolved with practice. He remained as weak as he'd always been in reality.

“Let’s compare this situation to a race. In a race, Haruka-kun would be fast,” said Oda-kun, with a deep frown. “And gaining speed even now. But as this world evolves, there’ll be motorcycles, cars, even airplanes—all the while Haruka-kun continues to rely on his own two legs. For now, though, he can outrun any danger. For now.” Warped strength, indeed.
He couldn’t continue like this forever. It would become impossible eventually, and then he would die. We couldn’t let him keep running, not in a world this dangerous. His fighting had to stop.
“He does have the dungeon emperor,” commented Oda-kun. “So maybe he’s fine now? That thing looked invincible!”
“Legit insane! How the hell was it only level 8?!”
Haruka-kun’s flustered explanation that he *enslaved* the dungeon emperor left me speechless, but Oda-kun was right: he should be safe now. There was a top-class guard if there ever was one. I mean, she was the *dungeon emperor*. But would one person be enough to protect him? He couldn’t last long in a battle of physical attacks, so a guardian wouldn’t be much help in that regard. She couldn’t withstand attacks for the two of them; they’d have to overcome enemies with devastating offensives.
Which put him in a *more* vulnerable position, since he was more likely to attack now. Some guardian she turned out to be!
“You can’t tell with his Villager A get-up, but he does have weapons from the bottom dungeon floors now, and they’ve got all sorts of crazy effects.”
“He should have way more attack power than before, so he’s incredibly dangerous now. The magic he was using was way out of our league.”
“It shouldn’t be possible—his MP is only 200.”
“He’s a crazy glass cannon!”
He was stronger than before, and more destructive. Why didn’t anyone understand that *that* was why I was worried?
His stats couldn’t keep up with his strength. At his stats and level, his body couldn’t handle that sort of power. Magic couldn’t protect him from his own might.
We kept trying to tell him to stop taking risks, but he always saved us in the end. I kept trying to tell him it was too dangerous, but he wouldn’t stop trying to help. He was only going to get stronger from here. I knew that much.

DAY 37
NIGHT
I thought that was erased from all history and memory, and banished to a place beyond the Lightless Realm!
THE WHITE LOSER INN

A*HHHH!* At long last, I could sleep in a bed! I had it reserved this whole time, but at last, I could actually sleep in it!
I reserved a separate room for Miss Armor Rep. She seemed less than thrilled about it, but she needed her alone time, too. Did she sleep, come to think of it?
Finally, I could sleep in a bed. How many days had it been? I asked people, but for some reason, nobody gave me a straight answer on what day it was. Maybe I lost track of time, but to be fair, I didn't know what calendar they used in this world.
When was it? Every time I asked, everyone ignored me. When I did get an answer, it was a prelude to a fresh round of anger, glares, and lectures?

All this, after my hard work getting up through the dungeon! After giving them all incredible discounts on souvenirs!
Perhaps they didn't appreciate that I made a profit off of the souvenirs. Did they only appreciate food? Why, why were they always so mad at me, when I never did anything wrong? The guy who dug that freaking hole in the wall —and don't forget the guys who lied about the cliff—they were at fault here!

I hadn't even gotten to the worst part: I conquered the dungeon and *still* hadn't found my sex appeal! Not even an item to raise it! I didn't get a single reward out of falling down there. All I got was an extra pair of eyes to glare at me! forty-two in total now. *I guess I should expect as much.*
If I kept falling down into dungeons, would the number of eyes continue to increase? My sex appeal would surely vanish deeper underground each successive time.
You could slice it any way you wanted, but the person who really needed a scolding was whoever dug that freaking pitfall! You could never spot a trap like that! This was all an evil plan crafted by the dungeon remodeler! Yet they insisted on being angry at me. It was in a freaking wall! Who would suspect a trap like that?!
No one else noticed it either. *See, that's proof enough that it wasn't my fault!* If someone had just *warned* me about there being pitfalls, I could've been prepared. Instead they gaslit me, talking about falling off cliffs—no, insisting that I would fall off a cliff, and I fell right into their trap! I was the victim!

Time to give the nerds a nice present of stone-roasted heads. *They deserve it!*

“Sheesh, I’m exhausted. Sleep-deprived, too. I dunno how many days I managed on naps alone…I don’t even know what day it is, goddamn it!”

I guess the dungeon was fun at times, and I did get a bunch of loot. Maybe dungeons were worth it. Dungeons were especially perfect for getting new equipment, since I couldn’t buy regular stuff. I offered most of it to the insatiable Miss Armor Rep in the end, but I still made it out with a lot of useful items. *Of course, I am* not *referring to the Submission Choker!* I would never reunite with my precious sex appeal if I used that. It’d erase my sex appeal from history itself, banish it to a place darker than the Lightless Realm!

Many of the items I found didn’t get a chance to shine, but they’d probably come in handy sooner or later. I bet that I’d need them as soon as I forgot about them. Though, even if I didn’t need them, they’d stop mattering as soon as I forgot about them. *Yep, let’s forget about all of those items.*

Time to chill out and relax! I had plenty of cash, and even better, I had rice and soy sauce. Plus a mountain of skills to test out, verify, and practice.

I was looking forward to Teleport in particular. If I figured out how to master that one, I could kiss goodbye to dropping down any more pitfalls. I knew, though, that Teleport was just a promoted skill from Movement. So it was likely to be completely dangerous and uncontrollable. Remember how many times Movement made me crash into things and squeal like a clumsy girl?

It was different from Ground-Shrink and Super-Speed; Class Rep and some of the others had those skills, and they were basically cheats or hacks. They belonged in different categories altogether.

Ground-Shrink was like a weapon technique in that it worked exactly as you intended. Apparently, it required some practice to master, but not to get the skill to activate properly in the first place. It activated on use. You couldn’t mess it up.

What made things more complicated was that you couldn’t cancel it after activation either, so the distance between you and the target would automatically close no matter what.

Meanwhile, Movement and Walking were…movement and walking. The end. You could control the skills yourselves, because duh—otherwise, you wouldn’t be able to walk or move. But you could mess up. And when you did, you would fall. You could fall, crash, and get tangled up in all sorts of things. So I knew Teleport would *definitely* require practice, but I couldn’t think of how or where to use it besides getting stuck in the dungeon wall again!

I’d better practice away from other people just to be safe.

Eventually, I learned that it wasn’t an automatic skill. You had to do *everything* yourself. It wasn’t a cheat skill. More like a cheat-you skill!

I was curious about Eye Mastery as well. Based on similar skills I'd heard of before, I assumed it was related to conjuring or sorcery? Wasn't Hypnotize another skill here? Hypnotism sounded a bit creepy, along the lines of Puppetry and Mesmerize. Servitude provided more than enough creepiness for me.

If I mastered something like that, I could forget about summoning any sex appeal. I'd draw in a whole police squad instead. *Maybe I should just leave that one be*, I thought*. When I level up weirdly I just get weirder skills!*

Then there were the skills Gravity and Holding, which I more or less understood, but I still needed to practice. Not that they were easy to use either!

Before now I would get a vague sense that I had used a skill, but now I saw the magic properly. It was probably an effect of "Jupiter Eye: A godly mind's eye that can see all the universe. Future Sight. Spell Eye. Wisdom Eye. Mimicry. Eye Mastery. ?" So I could see the magic now… That might make it easier to control and master these skills.

Then there was Supreme Thinking, the collector's edition boxed set of all the thinking skills, rolled up into one. It didn't make me smarter or anything, it was more like my brain felt more useful. It was like I'd equipped my brain with a computer hard-drive. By being aware of things, I could automatically run calculations and experiments, even several at the same time, apparently…but what happened if the computer *froze?!* My brain's OS was a major concern here!

Insentience was another mystery. Recalling the way my old skills were listed, this ought to be a promotion of Focus. Wasn't Focus more similar to Supreme Thinking, though? What was the difference? Had I earned it as a victim of so much slander from high school girls?

Then I had Jupiter Eye, an omniscient mind's eye, which did sound pretty useful—shame I had no hope of fully mastering it. I'd need a whole giant instruction book to figure it out; that was one cheat skill with way too many specs. So I'd never be able to master it, and I couldn't get new eyes, so I was stuck with these over-specced eyes.

I had so much to do that I couldn't relax at all. The skills looked great, but as of now, they were only for show.

"Status."

NAME: Haruka
RACE: Human
Lv: 18
JOB: —
HP: 320
MP: 343
VIT: 295
POW: 295

SPE: 344
DEX: 336
MIN: 350
INT: 368
LUK: Max (Above Limit)
SP: 2979
COMBAT: Peerless Cane Mastery Lv6, Avoid Lv4, Magic Entanglement Lv1, Life or Death Lv9, Rapid Movement Lv8, Bubble Lv4, Eye Mastery Lv1, Diamond Fist Lv1
MAGIC: Heat Lv9, Teleport Lv5, Gravity Lv4, Holding Lv4, Four Elements Sorcery Lv4,Wood Lv8, Lightning Lv8, Ice Lv9
SKILLS: General Health Lv9, Sensitivity Lv8, Body Manipulation Lv6, Walking Mastery Lv5, Servitude Lv9, Uncover Lv3, Magic Control Lv4, Presence Concealment Lv8, Stealth Lv9, Hiding LvMax, Insentience Lv4, Physical-Proof Lv2, MP Absorption Lv3, Revival Lv1, Supreme Thinking Lv3, Dash Lv8, Airwalk Lv7, Lightspeed Lv9, Jupiter Eye Lv1
TITLES: Shut-In Lv8, NEET Lv8, Loner Lv8, Bane Sorcerer Lv2
ABILITIES: Corporate Proactiveness Lv7,Master of None Lv9, Blockhead Lv9
EQUIPMENT: Wooden Stick?, Clothes Set?,Leather Glove?, Leather Boots?, Cloak?, Jupiter Eye, Ring of the Destitute, Item Bag, Monster Bracelet Power+39% Speed+26%, Vitality+19%, Black Hat

Wooooo! A level up! Level 18 now! That meant I leveled up six times within the dungeon in total.
I swept an entire freaking dungeon, and earned a meager six level-ups. I'd have to exterminate every single monster in the universe to get to level 99! Still, level 12 to level 18 wasn't bad. I got great boosts to my speed and intelligence, about 1.5 times what they used to be. I had about the same stats that my cheat classmates did in the level 30-35 range. Admittedly, some of them were over level 80 at present, but still…
I noticed Jupiter Eye was already leveling up. I guessed simply using my eyes gave it experience, leading it to level up easily. Or maybe that was the residual fear talking, after all the practice whatever-his-name-was put me through. Neither God's Eye nor Jupiter Eye could see his crazy moves!
My Magic Infusion LvMax had promoted to Magic Entanglement Lv1. LvMax must refer to level 10, and from there you could promote into upgraded skills. That meant my skills would change all over again! My to-do list grew yet longer. I could tell you from experience that when my skills got stronger, they also got harder to control. Why couldn't I have just a few automatic skills?
Diamond Fist read, "Adamantine Covering. Vitality bonus (large). Power 50% bonus. Diamond Fist." So it raised my stats? I wasn't fighting monsters

head on or anything, though. I'd never done that in my entire life? Still, my vitality stat had been pretty poor, so I appreciated the bonus.
I couldn't afford to get hit by any attacks, even so. Withstanding one attack meant nothing if it stopped me moving. Then I'd be dead meat.
Some of my other skills had leveled up too, but unfortunately I couldn't fully control any of them. All I could do was get used to my skills as they were for the time being. I couldn't help thinking that if I had fully mastered Uncover, I wouldn't be in such a dangerous situation in the first place.
Having all these cool-sounding skills that I couldn't even use was pretty ridiculous. It was as if I cobbled together a bunch of hand-crafted skills. If I couldn't figure them out and fully control them, they'd never be as efficient as automatic cheat skills. Practice, huh…

Oh! That reminded me that tomorrow was the Miss Armor Rep abuse festival. As in she'd be dishing out beatings to all of her challengers. *Hey, that is not a day of rest!* No rest to be had at all. In fact, her challengers were in for a nonstop whacking. Yep, that much was clear!

DAY 37
NIGHT
They say, ‘The wisdom of the Buddha be upon thee if gather three.’ So if three Buddhas gather, does that grant even better wisdom?
THE WHITE LOSER INN
GIRL’S MEETING
THE BATH

THE DUNGEON EMPEROR was referred to by Haruka-kun as Miss Armor Rep, but it turned out she wasn’t a member of the school council or anything. Her real name was Angelica. Her enslaver obviously forgot her name, so we did her a favor and called her by it instead. She apparently lived all by herself on the 100th floor of the dungeon, trapped and controlled by an evil darkness.

The eldest dungeon of all, as it was known, had quite a lonely emperor. According to Haruka-kun, she fought against the eternal flow of time all by herself. He added that she had been 17 years old…I guess for the whole time?

Haruka-kun battled against the darkness that controlled her, but that darkness only controlled a fraction of the girl’s true strength. Thanks to Angelica-san resisting the darkness alongside him, they managed to fight it and ultimately subdued it.

Down in the dungeon, she was a complete master of her domain. Angelica-san herself didn’t do anything, though, and supposedly, had been waiting quietly for Haruka-kun to kill her. Waiting, forever and ever, alone in the darkness. Waiting, never fully swallowed whole by the surrounding gloom. Waiting and waiting for the end to come.

And then Haruka-kun forced her into servitude and dragged her along with him.

That settled it. No wonder things ended up the way they did!

Haruka-kun would never kill her in such circumstances, and he certainly wouldn’t let her end things. I could never see Haruka-kun allowing her life to become a tragedy. He wouldn’t sit idly by as she followed her cursed destiny to an ultimately tragic fate, there was just no way!

Haruka-kun just wasn’t that type of person. In his endless selfishness, he refuses to leave any situation that he doesn’t like as it stands. And that was why he brought Angelica-san with him.

All the way up. All the way to town. To a place beyond the darkness. To a place where she would no longer be alone!

It didn’t matter that she was a dungeon boss, or that she was the dungeon emperor! It didn’t matter if she was a boss, or a queen, or an emperor, or grand emperor, or anything else. He decided to bring her along no matter what.
There was a lot I could take issue with. We had more than a few problems on our hands.
But I wasn’t going to complain! Not when Haruka-kun saved our entire class from the darkness and forcibly brought us here. He was constantly pulling stuff like that, damn him.
Haruka-kun also mentioned that inside of the armor, she was a skeleton. How did she have such a sensual body if all that lay underneath was bones…? I didn’t know, but apparently it was the truth. She used to be a dullahan, a lich, and a Deathking, but she didn’t like the work very much. Now she was a skeleton of an unspecified race.
Finally, now that she’d come all this way to town, she could participate in the girls’ meeting held in the inn’s public bath. I mean, even if she was a skeleton, she was still a *girl* skeleton, right? Being clean and hygienic was important. We couldn’t let her take a bath with Haruka-kun, skeleton or not. Now came the time to take off her armor, and—*what*?

***

Everyone washed up and got out of the bath. We helped Angelica-san put back on her armor…yeah, that was weird.
“Didn’t Haruka-kun say she was a skeleton without a race?” I asked.
“Yep, he said that,” everyone replied.
So he hadn’t realized what he had done.
If he had, he would have reacted in an entirely different manner. He would’ve realized the gravity of the situation.
What should we do? *I guess we need to hold a girls’ meeting*, I thought. I summoned everyone over. Everyone’s minds were still stuffed with onigiri and weapons, but we needed a meeting. We may not be able to do anything about this problem, but we had to do *something.*
Fortunately, Angelica-san nodded and shook her head in response to things, meaning we could understand what she wanted.
We had twenty-one people now. If that old maxim, “the wisdom of the Buddha be upon thee if gather three,” held true…we had about seven Buddhas’ worth of people now. Surely we could solve things.
We would be fine until tomorrow night. We had until then to figure out a plan.
The important thing was Angelica-san. It all came down to her. Haruka-kun was impossible to deal with, so we focused all our efforts on Angelica-san.

He had literally enslaved her. How had he not noticed?

DAY 38
MORNING
I never imagined that even being three times faster than her would get me no respect. Am I just a side-character in comparison?
ADVENTURERS' GUILD
TRAINING GROUNDS

STUDY TIME. I studied by watching. Observations assisted my own knowledge and experience. I could watch and understand things I hadn't seen before, observe them objectively, and comprehend them. I could learn a lot by watching. And I was currently watching the strongest fighting skills in this entire world: the swordplay of the dungeon emperor. In terms of technique, nothing could surpass it. The only problem was that I couldn't see a thing.
I mean, it was happening in front of my eyes, I was more than capable of seeing. The catch was that by the time I recognized what had happened, it was already over.
She was only level 9. When Haruka-kun used Servitude on her, it reset the former dungeon emperor—Angelica-san—back to level 1. She was 17 years old, and with low stats, too.

The self-proclaimed side character who could match her blows arrived next: a level 18, cheatless human named Haruka-kun.
He took a step. In the length of that single step, the clashing of the swords begun and ended. A single, trembling half-step was all it took for the swords to draw glittering slashes through the air. Silently, violently, they danced.
I saw a relentless, precise elegance, a sharpness that shed all clumsiness and excess. It was a dance of warriors on the verge of obliteration, too sharp for my eyes to snatch. It appeared to be graceful and elegant, but in reality, it was an endless combination of infinitely precise motions.
That was why I couldn't see it. My eyes witnessed it but couldn't process a second of what they saw.
Both of them had much lower speed stats than I did, barely a third of my speed at most. You'd think I'd be able to move three times faster than them…but I'd never be able to keep up with that. If we were all told to start fighting at the same time, they'd cut me to bits.
I had a lot of unnecessary movements in my sword-fighting. That's what I was witnessing—a sword fight comprising the bare essentials. They themselves may not be fast, but the exchange of blows was as fast as it could possibly be given their speed. My consciousness had no way to keep up.

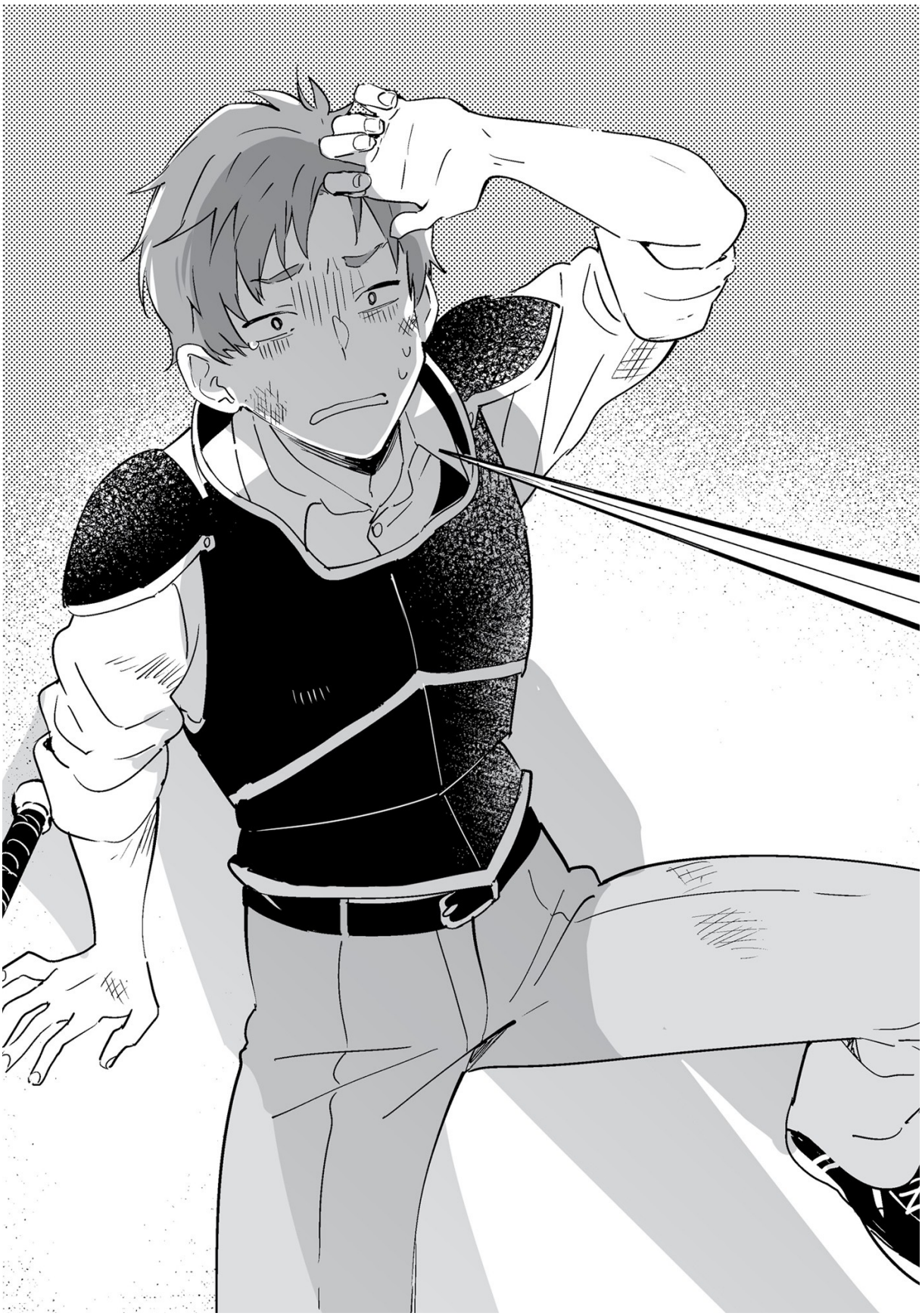
The careful footwork, the pauses that flowed and twisted like a river, the precise brandishing, the perfect gather, the splendid swings…all of that, yet no full-fledged blows landed. The swords hardly swung in the literal sense; tips traveled the shortest possible distance for the shortest possible interval —and within a fraction of a fraction of a second, the move was done. The moment you saw a strike coming, it was already over. It was that fast.
Even if I were three times faster, I could never keep pace with even 10 percent of the techniques. I'd be left utterly outpaced if I faced them in a fight.
Weapon techniques themselves would struggle against that speed. Weapon techniques couldn't be deactivated once begun, so they would be particularly vulnerable to such skill. No matter how fast or strong weapon techniques may be, they still followed a set pattern. Overcoming a set pattern would be like child's play to these two fighters.

Haruka-kun had overcome the level wall. You couldn't land a hit on him, regardless of the gap in levels. It explained why he wouldn't run away anymore…and why he'd eventually get killed. What use did these two have for the ugly, labored charade of inefficient moves known as weapon techniques? *Levels and skills*, I realized, *have nothing to do with true swordsmanship.*

I was slow to take a step, slow to swing my arm, extend my elbow, flick my wrist, tighten my shoulders, maintain my center of gravity. This made my sword slow to begin its trajectory, slower to finish it. These two had shaved down and trimmed the useless excess at every stage in the process. I was like a tortoise in comparison.
Everything ended at the same time for them: in an instant. This was unparalleled speed. They would end their bout in the time it took me to grab my hilt. A godly Swordsmaster's speed.
Still, the never-ending exchange of perfectly precise slashes were clearly performed before me, their intended audience. I could only see the flashing of silver, could barely comprehend the movements, but I burned the image into my mind nevertheless.

Eventually, they finished. Haruka-kun had sustained a brutal beating, but he came over with a smile on his face.
"Class Rep, why don't you train, too? You'll get beat up—I mean it'll be great, 'cause, y'know, it's kinda like bullying… What I mean to say is that it's abuse, no doubt about that, but it's good practice, too! What do you say?"
Haruka-kun, badly bruised, was about to take a break…and he was happily recommending that I get beaten up, too?! To be fair, it would surely be a valuable experience…

“Well, I wouldn’t be able to come close to touching her…but if I did happen to hit her, wouldn’t it be dangerous, considering the difference in our levels? Using real swords is dangerous, even if it’s just training.”
“Uh, how to put this… You’ll never touch her, though. Miss Armor Rep is equipped with totally ridiculous cheat items, so even at a higher level, you can’t beat her. She won’t let you touch her, trust me on that one.”
There wasn’t a remote chance that I would hit her, huh? Not even Haruka-kun, with his ridiculous speed, came anywhere close. And if I did happen to hit her, she would be able to withstand it. That was some wild cheat armor. How could anyone beat her, then? Would this really be useful? This was really promising to be a one-sided beating.
Still, I took part. She beat the crap out of me. And all twenty of the other girls.
Without magic, we were sitting ducks. Even when we did use magic, she dodged it breezily—our sword attacks were out of the question. Had we ever lucked out enough to hit her, she had Perfect Invincibility to counter it. She had to be the strongest person in this world. Who could ever beat her?!
She was currently trouncing Kakizaki-kun and his friends. The five of them were the strongest out of all of us at close-range combat, but make no mistake: they were losing.
I’d never seen anyone keep up with those five before. They had the agility of wild animals. Numerically, of course, we should make fine contenders; their innate nature and highly trained bodies were what gave them the edge. Never mind their stats—those were three times higher than Angelica-san’s! But none of the athletes could keep up with her. The difference surfaced when they started moving. Angelica-san’s movements were small but fast, flowing and free of excess, and beautiful due to their precision. Each movement was beautiful, like an elegant dance.
The pure, insurmountable beauty of perfect functionality and elegantly polished design, transformed into action—that is as holistic a form of beauty as you can get.
All five of them collapsed, leaving a single person standing: Angelica-san. I was captivated, envious, wonderstruck that someone of her caliber existed. So strength according to level was really only one kind of strength. We could grow powerful beyond our levels.



If we encircled her and attacked without any regard for casualties, we'd eventually take her down. We could crush her to death with our numbers, our stats, and the weight of our dead bodies. It would leave behind an incalculably massive number of casualties, but if we accepted our fate—a scene of violence beyond all comprehension—we could take her on. That's what it'd take to defeat her, if she were our enemy. We couldn't fight her. Our only option would be sacrifice ourselves and crush her. This girl wasn't built for fair fights.
To add insult to injury, this ridiculously strong warrior had received cheat item after cheat item from you-know-who. He said he "gave her offerings?" His own slave? Offerings?
Once she was done kicking our butts, we lined up for more.
Angelica-san was a fine teacher. She politely taught us through demonstration; she showed us her techniques, then how to block them. She taught us a full and varied curriculum while taking on all twenty-five of us at once. That was how much stronger she really was.

By the way, Haruka-kun took on and beat up the remaining four, Oda-kun and his friends. Their heads weren't alight just yet…but they did sob like babies as Haruka-kun chased them around.
We could still get stronger. Much, much stronger.
I assumed Oda-kun and the other nerds had gained some mental strength, as when I asked them about it later, they said they acquired a skill: Terror Resistance. I'd imagine having your skull set on fire would be a good exercise in being scared senseless.
Their forcefield magic had grown much stronger, as well. They even got new skills, Focus Forcefield and Composite Forcefield. They improved in all sorts of areas… though all of them were resistances.

Yes, we were all getting a little bit stronger, and we were nowhere near done.

DAY 38
MORNING
They don’t respond to me when I call out, plus they’ve got Xs over their eyes.
ADVENTURERS’ GUILD
TRAINING GROUNDS

I*T’S EVEN WORSE than I could’ve imagined! Teleport, you dastard!*

When I used it like I activated Movement in the past, my body instantly transported! It felt like going through a frame-by-frame playback, where my body moved while the rest of the world was frozen.

It made me faster, yes, but it was a speed I couldn’t even comprehend. I couldn’t keep pace with my own movements, meaning I got sloppy and it was hard to use skills. Still, it was definitely faster. I moved frame-by-frame while everything else was paused.

I had to adjust “Teleport Lv8” to use it for my arms, legs, back, shoulders, my entire body. Instant movement. And as a bonus, it compounded with my old skill Rapid Movement. *This is insane!*

Walking had turned into Walking Mastery, but that was a regular old speed boost. Even without using Teleport, I could walk as fast as anyone with Ground-Shrink or Blinding Step.

The sensation was just too weird. Humans weren’t supposed to move like this! Right? All of the movements were too sudden to anticipate, so you had to string together instantaneous advances and pauses. I was already exhausted.

Miss Armor Rep helped me train, but that led to me being covered in bruises.

I learned to deal with the speed somewhat, but now I was clumsier as a result, with more gaps in my movement. Miss Beater had no mercy even so; she picked up on the smallest gaps! She tossed me around like a damn rag doll!

Magic Entanglement was also a pain, another ability with way too many specs. It’d most likely allow me to strengthen my equipment, magical power, or anything else. What an overkill of an upgrade!

My body kept screaming at these movements that exceeded its physical capabilities. Shut up, body.

These new, unknown skills could force my body well beyond its limits. While I got used to them, I tried stringing them together, making new combinations. My efforts turned me into a bloodied, bruised rag doll. The second I lost control, Miss Armor Rep beat the crap out of me.

Sooner or later, Teleport would catapult my body ahead of itself and literally tear me apart like a broken marionette. I should take a break. My HP had plummeted into the single-digits from self-inflicted wounds.

Bullied, beaten, bloodied, bruised, and on the verge of a breakdown, Class Rep and others in the audience tried to use their sweet talk and cajolery. But I wouldn't be deceived! Soon it would be their turn to get beaten up! Despite their overwhelming stats and numbers, Miss Armor Rep destroyed them all with a single blow. They couldn't respond to her blinding speed, while she made their strategy dance on a string. She refused to be overwhelmed by stats, and her skill not only met their level but surpassed it, so she now she was beating them up. See, I told you they would get beaten up.

Even with a saturation attack of twenty-five on one, they couldn't overwhelm her. And boy, did her skill outmatch them. She continued to beat them up. Exactly as I forecasted.

They tried attacking in waves, but even then, they couldn't break through her wall of blinding sword strokes. Her skill overwhelmed them instead, leading to her beating them up some more. Hate to say I told you so!

My classmates were learning in earnest from their mock battles with her. They reduced their wasted movements, investigated and scrutinized them, and polished their swordplay to find the optimal motions. They simply weren't on her level; they weren't even close. They were in different stratospheres, different worlds. Sorry.

Her speed and precision attracted the eye, but her techniques also had depth. A single move by her contained many meanings, one step created endless possibilities. So you couldn't read her, and she'd destroy you before you could respond. Naturally, she could thrash you with swordplay alone.

Mwa ha ha. Feel my pain, classmates! That was power you couldn't cut through. A massacre masquerading as training. Training that sounds like a beating!

Let her beat them up however much she wants, I thought.

"Normally, I'm usually the only one who ever gets beaten up," I said. "Don't you feel bad for me? It's downright abuse! Yes, let her beat them to a pulp. All humans should get equally beaten, right? Equally beaten, bloodied and bruised equally, and broken down in equal amounts!"

I tried calling out to them, but they were basically corpses. Their eyes had been replaced by X marks.

We still had time before lunch, and now Miss Armor Rep was beckoning me to come at her. All right, my turn for a beating. I'd finally caught up with the nerds to vent some of my stress, but now my stress threatened to build right back up.

My only regret was running out of time before I could burn their heads. The nerds concentrated their forcefields exclusively on their heads, and layer

after layer of forcefields at that! Even a well-honed Hair Whorl couldn't breach that. I decided to throw the meteors at them tomorrow.
Now the abuse, the bullying that masqueraded under the title of "training" was about to begin. "Training" had to be a pseudonym for "beating," it was the only logical explanation!
In a breath, the world would be covered in slashing swords. I used Jupiter Eye and saw the present, the future and all its possibilities, everything and anything—and it was all beatings! There was literally no room for training! I had to break through the ceaseless storm of slashes, swing slash and… *heave!*
Moving faster than time, trimming the fat of every motion, stabbing in the shortest possible interval of time, seamlessly connecting into a slice, carving and slashing as the eras rose and fell around us. I had to scrutinize my most minute movements, control every motion in my body, perfectly grasp the displacement of my center of gravity, delicately grasp every action; knead, roll up, and present precise responses.
One step, another, one move and other, then I'd memorize it all—the up-and-down, right-and-left motion—as one technique, one action, to combine everything so far.
It wasn't the same as Life or Death, I hadn't merged it all together yet. I was getting faster, that was all. I was nowhere near ready to make a new technique yet.
Unleashing, getting repelled, receiving an unleashed attack, repelling it back again. Dodging and being dodged, striking, then facing her blows. If I lost the thread, I'd get beaten up. This was training, sure. Training for how to get the crap beaten out of you. Ceaseless bullying, training that hewed way too close to the definition of persecution.
"Why do you get so serious when it's my turn, Miss Armor Rep?" I asked. "It feels like you're not being merciful, not at all, y'know? You were way nicer to the others, even gave them some good guidance. Where'd all that kindness go?! You're having fun, too, I know it! You just wanna beat me up!"
In the end, that's just what she did. I had no chance, seeing how I couldn't use Magic Entanglement and Life or Death. And if I failed using those skills, I really was screwed! Using them incorrectly might mean killing myself in the process. I couldn't beat her unless those skills improved, but if she didn't go a little easier on me, I might kill myself in the process of trying to use them! I was literally losing HP every time I moved! I was way beyond my limit! Are you supposed to reach the verge of death by *training?* For real?
Somehow, even as I improved, my self-inflicted damage was increasing to match. I was practically a suicide bomber, driving myself into destruction. By lunchtime, I had less than 10 HP. She had been careful to beat me up to the precise verge of death! Wasn't she supposed to be my *slave?* What exactly did Servitude do anyways?!

DAY 38
LUNCH
Miss Steam and Mr. Mysterious Beam of Light presume they don't need to do their jobs, just because she's a skeleton.
ADVENTURERS' GUILD

MY CORPORATE PROACTIVENESS skill seemed to be relatively unknown in this world. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call myself a victim of it. That skill was totally useless!

"Whoaaa! Is it really okay for me to take this? Seriously? If you're lying, I'll cry, y'know. You can't ever get it back! I'm gonna lick it, just to make sure, okay?"

What a dirty old man this spear dude was. Dirty in all senses of the word, including in terms of hygiene, since he was licking his spear. Couldn't this have been relayed by message? Now I had to watch him lather up his spear with his damn tongue.

"Haruka-kun, are you sure? I wanted to repay you for saving my life, but I didn't manage to do anything…"

The sword dude didn't lick anything, which I appreciated. The four girls quickly thanked me for the weapons and rushed off to the training grounds. Leaving me surrounded by old men, per usual!

I'd never heard of getting summoned to a fantasy world, only to be surrounded by old geezers at every turn. The beautiful women were already far away, off to the training grounds. This had to be related to my sex appeal, right?

"Well, didn't you go looking for me in the dungeon for three days? You went all the way down to the 30th floor and all, but I went back from the gate on the 46th, right? Think of it as psychological consolation? Ya know?"

When the old dudes heard that I fell down the pitfall, they hurried to form a party to come rescue me. They planned to meet up with my classmates and made it down to the 30th floor when the news came that I'd made it back safely—they only just returned to the surface. They were in pretty rough shape, so I gave them weapons, and then it turned into a whole fuss. When they got back to the guild, apparently it was empty.

Including the tridents from all those frogs, I had collected nearly a thousand weapons, so I still had plenty leftover. There were the top-class weapons from the minotaurs and what not, and tons from the puppets and the lizards too, but they appreciated every last one. This city was already mad dangerous, and I'd barely given away any of my weapons! Not even the clubs, and there were mountains of those in circulation. The place was overflowing with clubs, actually, but oh well—huh? Did I just spy a bunch of

wives equipped with clubs talking in front of the greengrocer? Saying that they'd beat their husbands if they got cheated on? Yeah, I think I'd rather take my chances in the dungeon than the town.
The dungeon was dying, but rumor had it there were still monsters left above the 46th floor. I could probably beat them if I started from the 31st floor, maybe… Not now, but once I got a better handle on my new skills, it might be a good idea to go and fight them. Goblins would do for the time being. I was still very likely to trip over myself and crash into things.

I heard that even the duke, Meridad, sent out soldiers to try to help me. I decided to bestow a present of tridents upon them. I told the guild chief and handed them over. I bought the receptionists off earlier with some fruitcake, so I didn't owe them anything anymore. Falling down a pitfall was hard on me, too, you know. And life hadn't gotten any easier after I got out. Don't let me fall in the first place, damn it!
I turned to Miss Armor Rep.
"I'm gonna go home now. It's in the forest, but wanna come? It's, er, a cave…in the forest. Either way, it's my home, so, interested?"
She nodded. It seemed she'd be coming along with me. That'd accelerate the goblin clean-up! It wouldn't hurt to pick some mushrooms either, since I could probably sell them. I bet mountains of them were growing back there.
Class Rep and the others still had Xs over their eyes, so I decided to let them be. I wasn't sure if it was the beating or if they were exhausted. Heck, maybe Xs over the eyes was some hot new trend? They should appreciate it, though. Getting beaten up by a dungeon emperor was a rare and precious experience! Normally meeting a dungeon emperor resulted in death.
She beat me up all the time, I'm telling you. And that wasn't a rare experience. She beat me up indiscriminately! Do masters usually get beaten up by their servants every freaking day?
This was my first time in the forest in ages, and there weren't many goblins or kobolds. Their levels were lower, too. I found mushrooms wherever I looked, though. These would send the general store lady headlong into mushroom addiction.
The light shone through the leaves and made the forest feel brighter, somehow. The overgrowth felt thinned out, less dense.
I would never level up from paltry levels like these, but it still made for good practice, so I decided to beat up some monsters. It hardly qualified as training…but I resolved to hunt them to extinction. Wait a second, though—I couldn't do that if Miss Armor Rep slaughtered them all first?!
"Hey, leave some for me! I wanna practice on them. Can't I be the guy who delivers the beatings occasionally?"
Miss Armor Rep shook her head no. Passing through the trees, I could only see the hazy afterimages of her glittering platinum armor, and how the sunlight glistened on her sword as proceeded to execute goblin after goblin.

My training partners were getting completely wiped out. I was doomed to get beaten up again tomorrow in their place.
I hurried to attack the goblins, but in my rush, I crashed and smashed into them, tumbled all over the place, and generally caused a huge ruckus…*feels like old times!*
We arrived at the cave after hunting the goblins to extinction, and it was already late afternoon. I wanted to clean up, so I decided I'd stay for one night and then go back to town. We had way too much cleaning up left to do, both in terms of my room and goblin numbers.
I could head deep into the forest to do a deep cleanse…then come home and fix up my place, all before it got too dark. Miss Armor Rep looked around the cave with great interest. Was it the modern furniture, or did she just appreciate caves as a former dungeon emperor? Hang on, was she planning on turning it into a dungeon?! I guess I could always do some of my own renovations if she tried.
I went into the forest and discovered that the monsters really were weaker. The monster shortage was worsening. They might go extinct altogether if I didn't strike up a breeding initiative. Spoiler: I was not going to do that.
I couldn't find a single king, either. I occasionally came across a goblin boss, but apparently King of the Hill was over for good. *That's one piece of good news.*
Well, technically, it wasn't good news for my training. If I didn't hurry up and hunt them, there'd be none left to hunt! If I slowed down at all, there wouldn't be a single goblin left alive! This was a serious contest, first-come-first-serve. If Miss Armor Rep had joined in with my bargain sale, she would've crushed everyone to get first in line! We might have had to give her a new job title: bargain emperor.
There! I found a level 17 goblin at last. It was strong but slow. Its level wasn't especially low, but it was totally screwed to have run into me after I'd exchanged infinite blows with the emperor in the depths of her dungeon. A dull goblin's brainless whacking was only going to piss me off after that.
I went to the center of the forest, slaughtering goblins along the way, and still no kings. *I guess I'll pick some mushrooms and head back.* It was getting dark out. Tomorrow, after hunting some kobolds, I could go upriver to find some weak monsters. My volume of clubs continued to increase. It was still hard to believe how popular clubs were in town.
Now that I had even more mushrooms, the goblin shortage had led to an even greater excess of mushrooms. I had an enormous quantity of stamina and MP restoration mushrooms, but I couldn't find any potential mushrooms. A real shame. Those tasted amazing with soy sauce, and now I had rice, so I'd really been looking forward to it. But even my venerable Mr. Greatluck couldn't cause potential mushrooms to sprout out of nowhere.
I got back to the cave and started to clean up. It didn't take long with magic, but I was extra meticulous since it was my first time cleaning my

house in a while. The last time I was here was when I was waiting for whatever-his-name-was; the place had been empty for over ten days.
I guess I was fulfilling the expected role of a shut-in now. I'd reached level 8 with the Shut-In title, so why did it feel like I'd barely spent any time in my own house?
"Now it's sparkling clean!" I said. "It's great to be here again, House. After so long. Yeah, even though it's my house, and I can dash here for a day trip whenever I like, I haven't visited in ages!"
Yep, now I was fast enough to go from town to my cave and back in one day. Undoubtedly, it was thanks to my new skill Teleport, but I still hadn't tested that one out because it was so scary. None of my skills had turned out good so far. I couldn't trust them. I was in a world of magic and skills but couldn't even use them because they were so shady? What was up with that?
Walking had evolved into Walking Mastery, so I was bizarrely fast. When I hurried, it was as if distances contracted themselves; it felt weird, like space folded up before me. I wanted to figure it out but I couldn't pause for even a second, or all of the monsters would be exterminated! So I had to experiment on the fly, without any time to carefully verify things. I crashed into goblins at least ten times today already! That hurt…my first kiss was bound to be with some clumsy goblin at this rate!
I had to kill them all! I couldn't risk that coming to fruition!
After cleaning the bath, I put in the hot water. Ah, a good ole jacuzzi… I had to use wind magic to get the bubble jets going, but it was still a jacuzzi. Probably the only jacuzzi in this world.
"Miss Armor Rep, wanna take a bath? You can go first if you want. It's a jacuzzi, with jets and stuff, like a bubbly Jet Stream Attack, yeah? It's not your enemy, though! No sweat!"
Miss Armor Rep looked confused. She didn't get my Gundam reference, unfortunately, and seemed set on taking her bath after mine. I would just have to use the Bubble Jetstream Attack on myself!
"Ahhhhh, a hot bath after a beating really hits different. It's like the water is seeping through me and reviving my entire body. I'm literally coming back to life!"
Hey, yeah. For some reason, my Regeneration skill didn't class-up into Ultra Regeneration, but into Revival instead. Did I not get to regenerate anymore? Only revive? I thought Revival was a skill meant for monsters. Can humans *revive?* Could I get away with cheating death so easily?
"Uh…"
I could tell from my Presence Sensing that Miss Armor Rep had started to take off her armor. Couldn't wait to go the bath, I assumed, or maybe she was eager to take it off ahead of time. Whatever, she was a skeleton. She was a totally nude pile of bones when I first met her. Still, I didn't feel comfortable getting in the bath at the same time as her… It wouldn't be too weird if I helped her to wash her bones, would it?

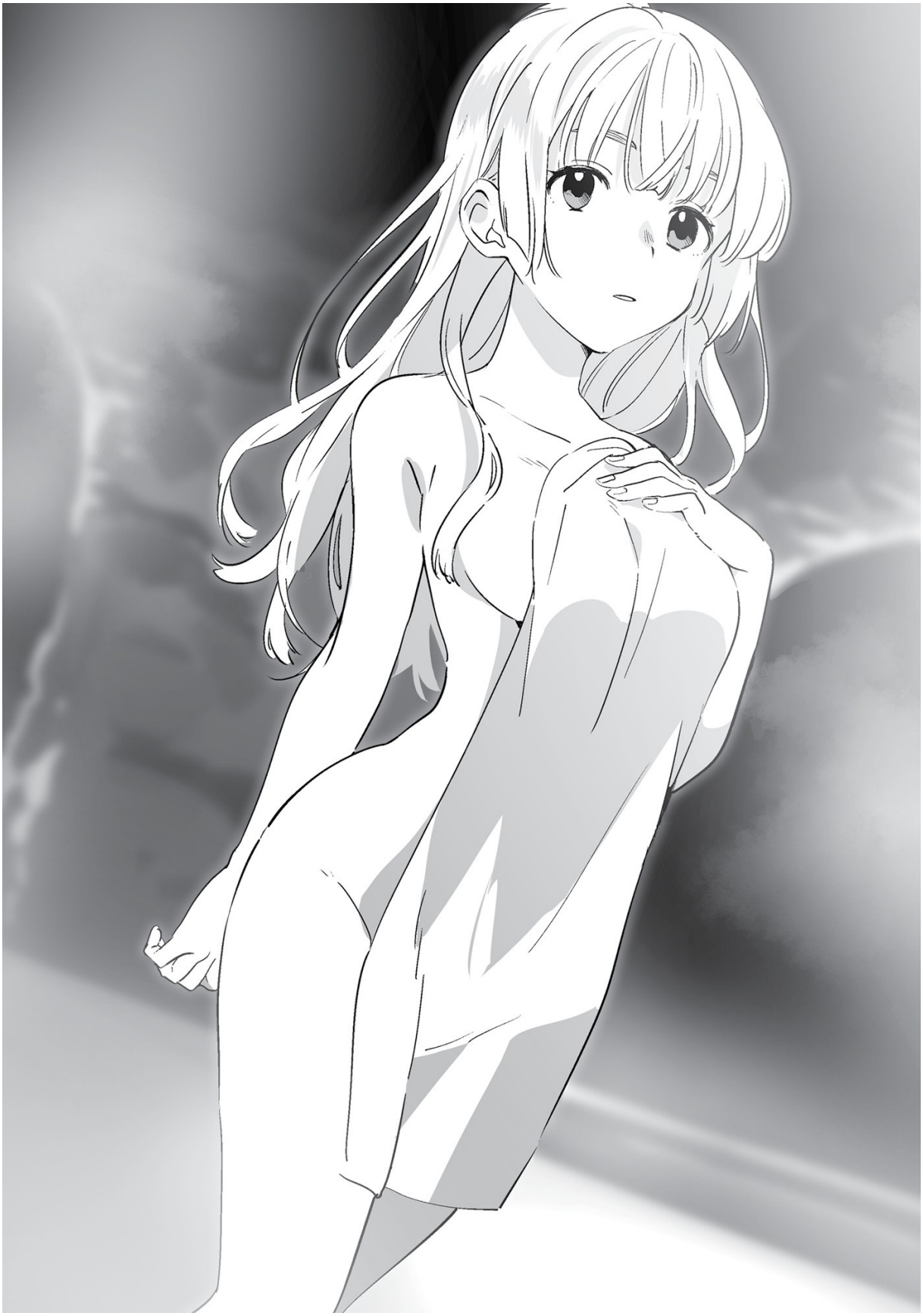
“It’ll be ready soon!” I called. “Mind just waiting a bit longer, ’cause I’m enjoying the soak, you kn—” I glanced over. “Kn—know…? No, no, no, no—*Whaaaaaa?!*”

Hang on. Hang on, hang on, hang on. Presence Sensing told me that it was Miss Armor Rep. Okay, she…got in the bath.

Was she offering to wash my back or something? Did she feel obliged to do a servant’s duty? Or… I don’t even know. My brain was kinda broken, the supremacy of Supreme Thought utterly failed. Just…what? What in the… what? What, what, in the *what*?! Who was I looking at?!

She had long, slender legs—since when had she grown long, toned, well-proportioned legs?

She held a towel in front of her body, and her back was totally naked—my god, she had long legs!



Yeah, hella long, and delicately crossed right at the top…those were freaking Scandinavian or maybe Roman *goddess* legs, porcelain-white and dazzling to look at—for real, who the *hell* was this beautiful girl?! Like, so beautiful that one glance was all you'd need to remember her for your entire life… Where was Miss Armor Rep? What was happening?
They always told me that I was crazy, but had I managed it at last? Had I snapped?
She had large, round eyes, trained right on my face. They were a little droopy, absolutely adorable—and holy god, her eyelashes were *long!* A dainty nose. Refined features. This girl was absolutely beautiful. I mean, this world was stuffed full of beautiful European-looking guys and girls, but she was on another level! Peerless, even among models and actresses, I had *never* seen a girl this pretty, so captivating, elegant, stunning, sweet. and lovely… And could she be…?! Could she possibly be who I thought she was?!
"Uhhhhhh. So, uh… Are you missing armor, uh, I mean a skeleton, or, uh, like… Dungeon emperor, always-beating-me-up Class Rep…A-a-a-a-are you…A-A-A-Angelica-san?"
She nodded.
Her body did resemble the curvaceous armored silhouette, but what gave it away was her dignified appearance and almost too-perfect posture. They matched Miss Armor Rep perfectly. This was Angelica-san? I thought she was a skeleton! I thought she was all bones!
But her way of nodding was very familiar, and below her head, two round objects nodded along with her—*big, too big!*
She had a smile on her face that could light up the world. *But she's a skeleton?* I thought. And raceless! That's what her status said! She wasn't hiding, or anything—and hang on! This situation was *extremely dangerous* for a horny high school boy! This was a goddamn danger zone, I m-mean I could see e-e-e-everything? *Miss Steam? Mr. Mysterious Beam of Light? You're not doing your job at all!* I was starting to overheat! What the—?! Oh, no, oh, no, oh, no, oh, no…it was too late.

Was this like waking up in the morning with a girl and not remembering how you got there—in real life?! Wait, no, it was still night.
I *thoroughly* washed myself. Every corner, every nook and cranny, every orifice. I washed *everywhere*, and then went to rest. I rested fully, amply, drenched. Just like any high school boy would.
I did it. I burst through the limits of high school boyhood into adult life. It *was* with a monster… No, but that didn't matter. At all. I was never going to encounter a girl as beautiful as her again. Like, not *ever*.
It felt pretty weird to have experienced…that…with a servant? Not that any of it was like, intentional, but she was smiling and happy so I think it was fine. Maybe? Was it fine? It was freaking amazing. But, y'know, was it really okay?

After all of my lamenting about the lack of monster girls in the dungeon, apparently I had one with me the whole damn time.

DAY 39
MORNING
If I've left my high school boyishness behind, does that mean I have to quit school?
THE CAVE

FIRST THING IN THE MORNING, the beatings resumed.

She woke me, and we ate breakfast together to the chirping of birds. *What exactly happened last night?*

As a joke, I told her she was cute last night, and her face went bright red. I thought she reached for her equipment to get ready for the day—but instead, the beating began early!

This was no regular morning after. This was another beating.

She already had a body in her armor, a perfect figure. I couldn't spar with her without getting turned on.

This was bad. The events of last night were too much, and they flooded my mind every time I looked at her. I couldn't focus at all.

She was imposing now, but last night, she was sweet. Her shyness was enticing, as was the way she winced…I was the one wincing today! And often, too, because I was getting the shit beaten out of me. Was this revenge for last night? Did I try too hard? I'd probably see Super Horny and Alpha Male if I looked at my status. I definitely tried too hard! I was no better than Class Rep!

"Why am I dying? I'm almost out of HP! If I didn't have the Ring of the Destitute, I would have already hit zero! This is way more than a typical beating!" I shouted. "I can practically see the nerds beckoning me to the far side of the river…even though I burned them? Well, I burned down virtually the whole riverside instead, but still?"

This was way too much for any high school boy to handle! My eyes were starting to catch fire! Thanks to Jupiter Eye, I could see every part of her body moving, *so* clearly, *thank you, Jupiter Eye…*

And then I had Supreme Thought, so I could remember every exquisite detail of last night, as clearly now as if it were happening anew. I couldn't fight like this! It took every bit of my effort to avoid getting killed. I'd already used every bit of my effort last night, anyway. *Don't think about that now! I'll die!*

There was her voice, too, if I had to keep talking to myself I might forget how to have a conversation all together. I wanted to teach her to speak! But I had to survive in order to do that…I heard her voice last night, though, and it was *sooo—ahhhhh*!

Holy shit, I almost got my head cut off! Miss Armor Rep was blushing again for some inexplicable reason. Was that steam coming out of her ears? Was

she a steam engine? Could I hear a whistle blowing, or was I imagining it? *I don't have time to worry about that now!*
I think I used Teleport just now. If I hadn't, I would've gotten my head chopped off. It'd all be over if I hadn't dodged that last strike, so I must have darted away in an instant, which was pretty much the definition of Teleport. Getting lost in my thoughts again would mean facing more fatal attacks, and Miss Armor Rep's face was turning red again. She didn't talk, she acted like the cool silent beauty, but deep down…she was shy. Furiously shy, and now furiously attacking me. I was done for, dead as a doornail, if I couldn't get her to stop.
"L-look, I'm sorry for teasing you, 'kay? I'm serious. You were cute!"
I cautiously reached out and patted her on the head.
She liked it when I patted her head in the dungeon, so I gave it a try. I nearly had my arm hacked off, but hey, so long as it was only my arm, I had Revival for that! Not that Revival made sense for humans. My head was definitely a step too far, or I wanted to believe it would be, anyway. You could hardly call me a human if my neck sprouted new heads!
At last, she seemed to relent, her gleaming platinum armor and scarlet cloak slowing to a halt. That was fierce. I'd managed to extend my life a little longer. *I'd better be careful about teasing her*, I thought. *It could cost me my life!*
Anyways, I took the lead and headed into the forest. I'd be in serious trouble if she took the lead; just imagine the view from behind. I was keeping that part secret, okay! Great, all good, now let her lead for a bit…*ahem,* okay, back to the front.
"I wasn't thinking anything!" I swore. "For real! I wasn't thinking, just flapping my wings on a little jaunt through a high school boy's imagination! Is it my fault that a high school boy's imagination is usually full of sexy fantasies? No, it isn't!"
I felt a surge of bloodlust from behind me. *Please don't cut my head off!* I was fairly sure that wouldn't grow back, like I said.
The forest was full of dangers, it turned out. I had to brace myself. I needed to seal away my high school boyishness for a short while…although, I had been absent from school for more than a month. Did I count as a high school boy nowadays? *Can you still check off your attendance after being summoned to another world?*

I had to distract myself from my dangerous thoughts…but closing my eyes only revealed soft, inviting white skin, so my life depended on opening my eyes*. My god, her legs are so long!* Beautiful, a little plump, and so soft—*oh, damn it!*
I narrowly escaped with Teleport. I was getting the hang of it, although it seemed it would only activate if my life was at risk. That was happening approximately once every five minutes, so anything that saved me was fine with me.

I couldn’t turn off my high school boyishness. That was, apparently, out of the question.

There weren’t any goblin kings, but I did face off with some kobold kings for the first time in a while. At level 37, they were ridiculously fast, around 300 speed. Numerically they weren’t as fast as me, but they had the sharp movements of wild animals, and evaded me on instinct alone. They slipped out of reach, but I wasn’t about to let them chomp on my head either!
It wasn’t like I *felt* like my head had nearly gotten chopped off 100 times today. It *actually* nearly got chopped off well over 100 times! Meaning I must have recalled the events of last night more than 100 times, but wasn’t that typical of a healthy, high school boy? Whatever, it wasn’t like it had happened a thousand times yet or anything.

Time to get back to town. My classmates would get mad at me for sure if I stayed another night, and if I went back to the cave…I’d get caught in a trap of my own high school boyishness. There was no point in denying it! I got caught in that same trap in the middle of *fighting!* Only glances, mind you, I did my best to restrain myself. I was just glancing at armor! C’mon! Was a boy not entitled to look at some armor? Sexy armor, sure, but give me a break!

DAY 39
NIGHT
I bet that'd feel absolutely amazingly amazing, I'm not sure exactly in what way, but I bet it would!
THE WHITE LOSER INN

I ARRIVED BACK IN THE CITY right before the shops started to close, so I swung by the clothes shop.

Miss Armor Rep had a human body. I felt bad that she was always wearing armor. She was a girl, so she must like clothes, right? Even if she didn't, she was beautiful, so I had enough interest for the both of us! Miss Armor Rep looked around. Maybe she was unable to decide, or holding herself back, or extensively comparing items… She seemed to be enjoying herself, so I forced her to buy a ton of stuff.

Yep, she couldn't decide for herself, so I bought clothes for her: this, that, and everything else! I needed her to keep my eyes healthy. Whenever I looked at her I practically fell to my knees. She was like a work of art! *I'm going to look at her every chance I get. I swear!*

We combed through the store and—unfortunately—didn't find any sexy outfits. That was a damned unfortunate shame, just the worst outcome. Sure, I would have been unfortunate in terms of high school boyishness if there *were* sexy outfits, but there weren't any.

Miss Armor Rep happily strolled out of the store with a huge bundle of clothes in hand. Could she even see in front of her? I offered to put them in my item bag and hold half, but she shook her head no.

She enjoyed the shopping, so maybe she thought carrying everything home was part of the fun? I mean, she looked like she was having a great time. This was her first time doing any of this, so I bet it felt special and exciting to her. She was pleased as punch to have received a small mountain of clothes from me.

As we walked around buying everything insight, we enjoyed a very one-sided conversation, I glanced there, she glared here, and so on.

It seemed to satisfy her, judging from the bright smile on her face. *How can I read her expression when she's wearing her armor now, though?* It wasn't too different from her glaring at me when she was a skeleton, I supposed.

In the end, we visited every clothes store in town before returning to the inn…yup, they still hadn't changed the name.

"We're back! Sorry for being late, but we cleaned the cave and the forest! I left it alone for such a long time, so, I had to clean it…and now it's clean! Totally, thoroughly squeaky clean with sparkles on top!"

I was met with no fewer than forty glaring eyes! What was with the mood in here? Their glares coiled around me… *I better make fried rice!* Time to

activate fried-rice mode! I do declare, I've fried rice to prepare! Cook-fried-rice-and-avoid-anti-glare strategy, *engage*!
"Welcome back. So you cleaned your cave? *Thoroughly?"*
"Wow, like, a thorough cleaning?" said Vice Rep B. "You look pretty *clean* yourself."
"You must have cleaned soooo many things."
"An overnight cleaning, huh? Bet that was real rough."
"Everything must have been so *total* and *thorough* and *squeaky*, since you were gone so long!"
(Et cetera, et cetera.)
I cheerfully brandished the frying pan. Fire Magic sufficed for heat, and heat itself was what mattered! I needed to pan to get sizzling. Eggs were precious, but I had just enough—the rice was crumbly, but I had plenty of other ingredients. It turned out that long-grain rice was ideal for fried rice, though. I had plenty of soy sauce in stock, so my ultimate final ingredient had to be sesame oil.
I didn't have white pepper so I used black pepper instead, but it should still taste good. *Personally, I would prefer some seaweed in my fried rice, but beggars can't be choosers, can they?* I whipped out six pans and started to make soup in a big pot. The karaage was sizzling, too; preparations were almost complete. A classic Japanese fried-rice set meal was descending from the heavens unto this world!
I drizzled some soy sauce into the big pot, and as it reached a mild char the scent of cooking soy sauce filled the dining hall. The girls, who had been chattering about this and that, fell completely silent. They ogled the fried rice and began to drool.
"The fried rice is ready! Bring your own plate and get your serving! There's also mystery bird-meat karaage! And soup! It's a fried rice set, you get it! Oh, and a side of the usual mushrooms."
They immediately lined up, plates in hand like a bunch of hungry schoolchildren. Their smiles were so big, they nearly popped off their faces. Squealing with delight, the moment they sat down they started stuffing their faces. The meatheads brought massive plates and earned themselves a sound beating with the ladle. Then I gave them an extra portion of fried rice and some bonus karaage, which they shoved down their throats even as they rushed back to their seats.
I supposed fried rice and karaage were guaranteed to be a hit with the guys. Everyone got their portion, so I waved over to Miss Armor Rep and brought her some, too. She didn't seem all that interested, but if she could eat, it'd be a shame for her to go without delicious food! Tasting it alone should make her happy. I gave her a big, hearty serving. Mission complete! At long last, we could enjoy a fried rice set in another world.
"It's delicious!"
It went down a storm with everyone. I had nowhere near enough ingredients or seasonings to pull it off! Was it really that good?

A single bite transported me back to Japan. I'd been gone for a tiny bit over a month, but the taste filled me with nostalgia. It reminded me of my everyday life, back before I knew anything about other worlds. I still loved book stores but no longer felt the need to seek one out. Should I summon one here? Would Melon Books do?

Miss Armor Rep couldn't eat with her armor on, and especially not with that helmet, so she went and changed. She'd manage fine if she took off the helmet and left the rest, but I assumed she wanted to try on her new clothes. She could hardly wait to pick out new items in the shops and was desperate to take them home. I'd need to keep giving her tributes even after getting out of the dungeon!

Everyone joyfully munched and chowed down on their food, before the armorless Miss Armor Rep finally came down to the dining hall…or should I say descended from the heavens unto this dining hall?

"Sh-she's beautiful!"

All she did was take off her armor and put on regular villager's clothes, but the whole room froze in response. Every single person was captivated by her, no longer even looking at their food. *It's fried rice, though? Delicious fried rice!*

She wore a simple long tunic or dress with ankle-length loose pants, as normal as you could get. It perfectly accentuated her every inch, but the clothes themselves were nothing special.

They didn't *need* to be special. Miss Armor Rep pulled off the look with her stunning flair and perfect figure; she looked like a freaking model! If she modeled this outfit, it would go flying off the shelves! Wearing the outfit made it the pinnacle of fashion. She transformed a totally normal clothing item into a casual-cool coordinate costume! What ridiculous power models wielded!

The dress draped loosely on her body, showing off her incredible figure. Loose pants like that normally looked uncouth, but her astoundingly long legs made them super stylish and sexy. My god!

Her face was more amazing still. The poster girl, who was seeing her from close-up for the first time, had forgotten how to breathe; the girls around her stepped in to revive her. Everyone else took a deep breath, transfixed. She was so beautiful that she was a health risk!

The boys froze in unison as soon as she appeared. They were just now thawing out. I wouldn't mind if the nerds stopped breathing, personally—they never read the room anyways, so why not stay frozen along with it?

Don't even look at her. I'll burn your hair off!

The girls took a bath with her the other day, so they shouldn't have been surprised, but nope, they were as completely entranced as the boys. *Her appearance is* way *more devastating without clothes, in my opinion. Never gonna forget that.*

The armorless Miss Armor Rep came back over to me to eat. She sat down and began her meal. People from a fantasy world weren't likely to know

what fried rice was, but she nodded happily as she ate it up, so it must've suited her palate well enough. *Good!* I was relieved to see fried rice was just as mighty in this other world.

"I was thinking about going to clean the dungeon tomorrow. My renovations were interrupted and all, so…"

Miss Armor Rep tilted her head, looking troubled. She didn't know that I'd taken the initiative to renovate her dungeon. If only I hadn't fallen straight to the bottom floor and been able to go down each floor one at a time! I would've turned the dungeon into a dope underground palace by now.

And wasn't that the ultimate way to raid the ultimate dungeon? You could slowly turn a dungeon into a residence, then shock the monsters to the death via before and after shots.

The monsters that lived there for all of eternity would never expect their home to turn into a large underground hot spring, but c'mon! Hot springs rock! Especially when you have someone to go in with. I bet that'd feel absolutely amazingly amazing, I'm not sure exactly in what way, but I bet it would!

Say I did go through with the renovations, though, my fate would be sealed: I'd become a shut-in on the dungeon's 100th floor. *I may never leave!* An elevator would be essential.

Anyway, there were plenty of hidden rooms left. I should check those out at least.

DAY 39
NIGHT
There's no way it was a coincidence—it was inevitable, and therefore, not my fault.
THE WHITE LOSER INN

THE ARMORLESS MISS ARMOR REP followed me to my room, so I sat her down next to me and talked to her. I sat her down on my bed, for absolutely no reason whatsoever. No reason at all. None. Whatsoever.
She couldn't really talk yet. Talking was kinda like rehab therapy, I guess—we barely knew anything about each other, but there was no need to rush. We were finally out of the darkness, and had arrived at a place with other people.
Wanting to talk was only natural, which was why we had brief conversations during practice. Up until now, we could only talk with her nodding or shaking her head, but she'd started to say simple things like "Yes" or "O… kay." She couldn't say much, but she tried her hardest. Each time she said something, I patted her on the head, resisting the urge to pat other places. It felt wrong to turn off the lights after all that hard work to reach somewhere with any light at all. I was trying my hardest, see? I really was. It took every ounce of my willpower to resist.

The first thing we talked about was what to do about Servitude. She wasn't a monster anymore. She may have technically been raceless, but she had a human body and mind, so she was human to me. It was messed up for humans to enslave humans, so we needed to release her from Servitude.
It didn't make sense for a human to use a skill meant for monsters on other humans. Nope, no sense at all… *Forget about the mean girls, okay? They're hardly human!* Servitude must have recognized that, and that's why it worked! They were terrifying! Why were they *still* enslaved, anyway?! The slaver couldn't free his own slaves! I kept trying and it wouldn't work!
Anyways, back to Miss Armor Rep.
I told her that she should break out of Servitude and do whatever she liked, be free to do the things she had never been able to do, visit the places she had never been able to go, freely do whatever she pleased in the great wide world out there. I told her that even after she was no longer my slave, I'd still help her, do anything for her that she needed. I told her she could do anything she wanted. I told her, "be free." (I had to repeat it a bunch of times before it really resonated.)
I explained it to her in as much detail as possible, but her eyes swelled with tears—why was she was shaking her head? She stared deep into my eyes and repeated "No."

I figured I wasn't getting through to her, so I explained myself again. She shook her head again. She was clearly about to cry, so I quickly said, "Okay, so you want to stay together?" and she smiled and nodded yes.
She was trapped all alone in that black darkness, without anyone else in the world. I guessed the fact that it was slavery didn't matter to her. Criminal and awful as it was, she was desperate for human companionship. She'd rather stay a servant than be alone.
It may make the most sense to stay like this a little longer, I thought. My sex appeal was a trillion feet underground, but so what? I doubted it'd fall any further than it already had. No worries… *Am I really okay with this situation?!*
My next question was, why had she given up on being a skeleton? Wasn't it a bit late in the game for her to quit being a skeleton? Could skeletons just quit and return to being human?
It was a splendid accomplishment: she quit her job as dungeon emperor, quit being a lich, quit being a dullahan, and even quit being a Deathking. She was a job-hopper! No wonder she hopped out of her skeleton and into a real body!

We exchanged faltering words, awkward gestures, stumbling our way through everything that had happened one at a time.
Eventually, I understood the cause, the culprit behind it all. This explained all the mysteries, provided the missing link, slotted in the last piece of the puzzle. The entire truth was revealed under this perfect spotlight! The cause and the culprit of this case was…me! *Why was it always me?!*
Well, not to state the obvious, but you can never come back once you die. The undead are souls, cursed to never come back to life. They can't become human again; it's not possible.
According to Miss Armor Rep, skeletons were cursed to possess a soul along with its accompanying magic power. But when I gave her the "Platinum Armor: Cursed. Unifies the wearer's flesh and blood. Perfect Invincibility, Max Power-Up, Guardian, ?, ?, ?," it took her soul and magic power and reunited it with her flesh and blood.
Then came the "Blessed Bangle: Sublimates curses and disaster (limited to one-time use)," which sublimated her curse and allowed her body to return. She may have died, but now her bones, her soul, and her body were all gathered. In that state, the "Necromancer Jewel: Governs life and death. Instant-Kill, Instant-Kill resistance," that I gave to her could activate… *seriously, I guess it's no surprise that she came back to life with all those items!*
So she came back to life, duh! Who said you couldn't?
I also gave her the "Eternal Fortune Ring: Brings happiness, repels misfortune. LUK bonus (large)."
Yep, at that point it's a given that you'll come back to life. I sure was the culprit here!

The magic sword, cloak, and choker as well as the items I gave her combined to enable a miracle to happen. That was why she was so thankful and helpful to me.
I was to blame, but it wasn't a coincidence, and hardly a miracle. What was weird was how all of those items were right there in the dungeon for the taking. It was practically inevitable that she would come back to life.
So, you see? I didn't do anything special. All of those items were there for her, for Angelica-san. They were waiting there for her the whole time.
All those items—so impossibly rare that you could search the whole world for them and come up empty—were gathered in one place, one dungeon. How was that anything but fate?
She cried when I said so, but it was true! It couldn't be a coincidence. If it wasn't a coincidence, it was fate. She would never be allowed to die there, sad and alone.

Miss Armor Rep cried for a while. She probably hadn't been able to cry before, no matter how much sadness, pain, suffering, hopelessness, and loneliness she felt. She couldn't shed a single tear. She didn't have anyone. So now, she let it all out.
It was like she let out all of her sadness and pain in those tears. For the first time in her life, she could cry when she wanted to. She should cry her heart out.
After that, Miss Armor Rep asked about me, and about my class. So I told her about how we came from a completely different world. How we were all high school classmates.
About the annoying old dude in the white room, and about the garbage skills that were forced on me.
About how I lived by myself in the cave, how I fought monsters for the first time, and how I had to survive off of mushrooms because I couldn't catch any fish.
About what happened with the obnoxious nerds and the goblins. About how I learned to fight with a staff.
About how I met up with the girls and lived in a tent. About how we wandered through the forest in search of a town, about how we found the town, and started living there, and about how feet-stomping became a trend among nobles, and about the sheer idiocy of the meatheads.
I told her about how I didn't die, and about how I almost died.
I told her about killing my classmate, and about how the ordinary background character survived. And about how, after all of that, I went to the dungeon, fell to the bottom, and met her. I told her the full story.
Saying all of it aloud, it felt like old news. Even though it had all happened in the space of a month and a few days…to my current self, it could be a story from long, long ago.
When I told Miss Armor Rep about whatever-his-name-was, she seemed to get pretty mad. She shed enraged tears. It reminded me of coming back

afterwards, when the girls all cried while getting mad at me. *Why was everyone also mad at me?*
I tried so hard, and *still* my sex appeal wouldn't go up!
At least everyone could smile now. We had gained a member, too. They couldn't blame me anymore.
It got late, and we got tired of talking. And then, after…uhm, becoming even more tired, we fell asleep.
Don't blame me, okay? I was just a horny teenager.
I can say it with absolute confidence, I thought. This world is a beautiful place…at least, it is late at night.

AFTERWORD

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING! My name is Shoji Goji. While I may have gotten the first volume published by fraud, sticking a beautiful girl on the cover, and in spite of thunderous criticism, I have been graciously allowed to write a second volume.

I admit, it was a trap: in the first volume, once you opened the book past the lovely Class Rep on the first page, you meet the ugly but true main character of the series. My editor, Y-san, was the one who planned such villainy. It was virtually inevitable that Volume Two would feature yet another trap after that.

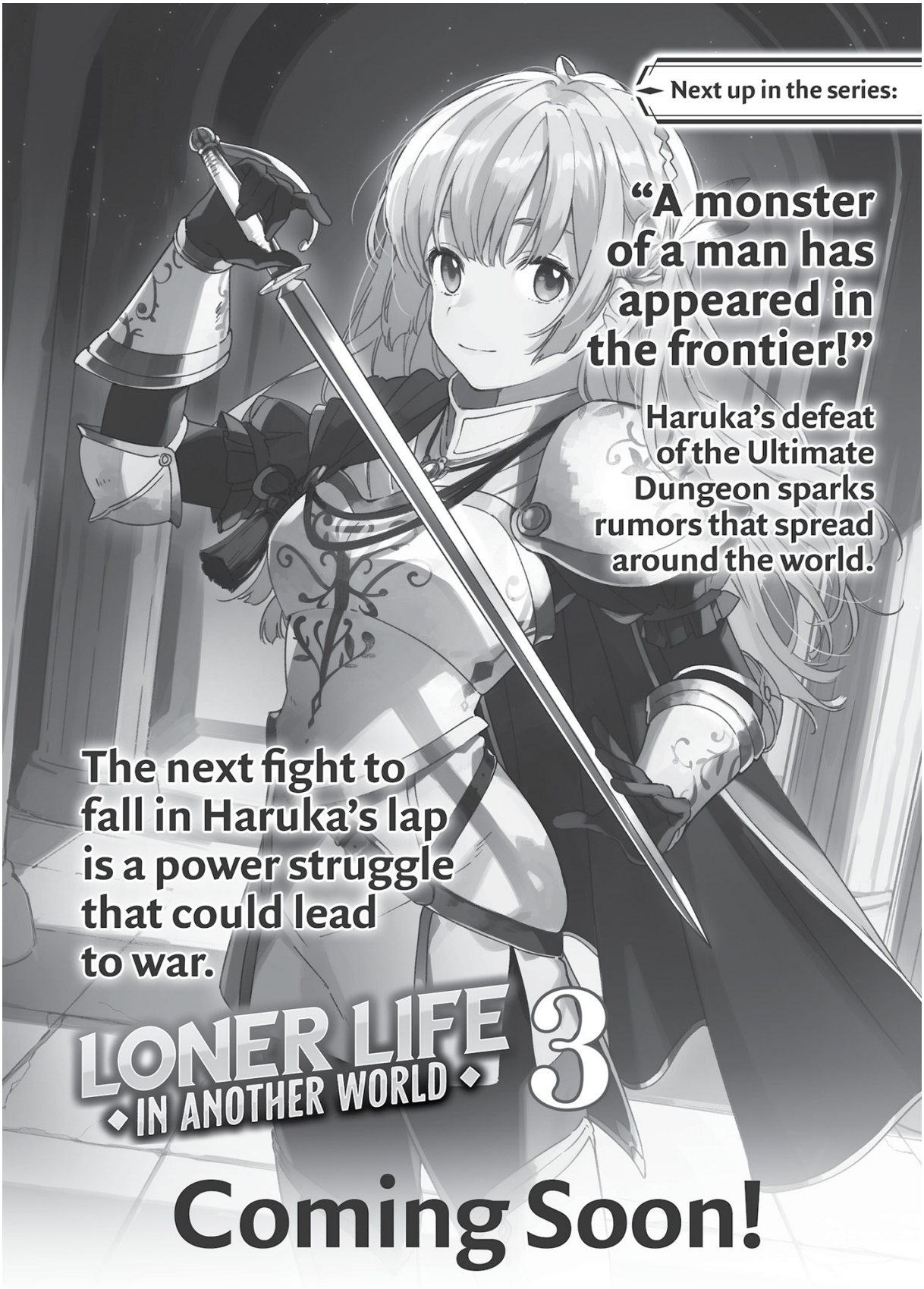
So thank you, Y-sama, for continuing to commit crimes on the regular. I'm a bit worried about getting drop-kicked by the unshakeable booota-sama, but I remain extremely grateful for their wonderful pictures nonetheless… despite unreasonable request after unreasonable request. (If you really need to, feel free to headbutt me at full-speed :D)

I further give my thanks to the marvelous Ouraidou-sama for the furious edits…I'm sorry, I really am!

I even further give my thanks to the amazing bookstores that graciously took the risk of putting my book on their shelves. When we released the first volume, I was afraid that readers would get mad and start a book bonfire.

Thank you to my online readers, for their many revisions and honest impressions and countless jokes. (I admit I've stolen way too many of them, lol). Thanks to all of you, I've managed to publish two volumes.

And finally, to everyone else who has read my books, I cannot thank you enough.


Next up in the series:
“A monster of a man has appeared in the frontier!”
Haruka’s defeat of the Ultimate Dungeon sparks rumors that spread around the world.
The next fight to fall in Haruka’s lap is a power struggle that could lead to war.
LONER LIFE IN ANOTHER WORLD 3
Coming Soon!

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